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XLR8R

79
AUGUST
2004

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PHILIP SHERBURNE GUEST ED'S RANT TECHNO IS BACK



Photo: Christopher Woodcock

Eminem's infamous pronouncement "nobody listens to techno" in the song "Without Me" was laughable, but he was onto something.

Consider the evidence. In a recent email update, Aquarius Music, one of San Francisco's most forward-thinking record stores, calls dance music "faceless, formulaic fodder" and unabashedly declares, "None of us here really like 'techno' all that much." The booking manager of Mezzanine, one of San Francisco's best and largest dance clubs, admits in an email to me that she's not fond of techno. Even a weekly email calendar of local club events, polling readers on their favorite dance music genres, somehow manages to omit an obscure little form called techno.

Sibling to house, techno ought to be one of America's proudest musical achievements. The storied genre developed in the African-American communities of the country's Midwest—dovetailing with electronic experiments in Japan, Germany and the UK—before going on to spark a global youth movement that still captivates the hearts, minds and posteriors of fans from Finland to Tierra del Fuego, Argentina.

But techno sure has fallen from favor since the days when you could use the word as a reliable substitute for electronic music in general. Squeezed by competing genres and misconstrued as a stab-happy throwback, techno's become the awkward dinner guest that just wouldn't leave. (It doesn't help that the music industry's troughs have run dry; even at electronic music's kiddie table, all you hear are scraping plates and cries of "No room!")

Signs of a North American resurgence, though, are afoot. Recent sets from 2ManyDJs and LCD Soundsystem's James Murphy at Mezzanine were thick with four-to-the-floor bangers. A bill featuring Kompakt's Michael Mayer and Superpitcher drew 1400 people to an event at Brooklyn's Volume that was widely praised as a top-notch "adult rave." (A contradiction in terms, perhaps, but if the stick glows, twirl it!) And Richie Hawtin chose Montreal's MUTEK festival as the venue for his first live Plastikman show in nine years.

Undoubtedly, much of the credit goes to the little folks—the DJs, ravers and especially the record labels that never gave up on the infinity found within the four-to-the-floor pulse. Ann Arbor, MI's Ghostly has proselytized techno's myriad forms from coast to coast. And our cover stars at Kompakt have insistently spread the message over 11 years and 100 thrilling releases, each one modestly redefining the "t"-word to a T.

When I traveled to Cologne to meet Kompakt's Wolfgang Voigt, one of the genre's most tireless advocates, I asked him how he would respond to a naysayer who derided techno for sounding simply like *boom boom boom*. "What else does anybody need than *boom boom boom*?" he exclaimed—only half kidding. Citing the success of Mayer, Superpitcher, and Reinhard Voigt's recent North American tours, his historical perspective was enlightening.

"I was at CMJ in '92, and I met Richie Hawtin and Jeff Mills, and it was all fresh and new," says Voigt. "Everybody felt united under one great bass drum—and then when I went to the clubs in New York and I saw how the records sold in the States, I said, 'Okay, there's not really any techno in the States.' In the '90s, most of the main American or Canadian techno acts earned their money in Europe, because it was not really happening [in North America]. Compared to that, from our small, Kompakt perspective on the States, it's better than ever."

—Philip Sherburne

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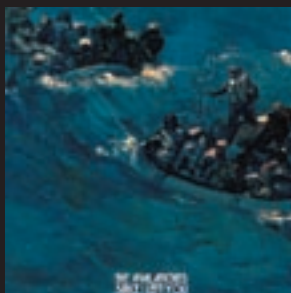
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ON THE COVER: Michael Mayer of Kompakt by Kira Bunse; design by Commonsense

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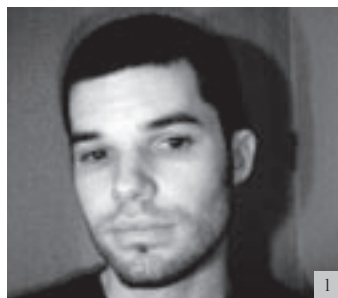
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1. MATTHEW NEWTON

While honing his chops on the freelance circuit, Matthew Newton has cornered countless visual artists and musicians for interviews—whether they wanted to talk or not. Tucked away at his woodland compound in Pittsburgh, PA, Mr. Newton slings ink for such top-notch publications as *XLR8R*, *Straight No Chaser* and *Anthem*. Raised on a steady diet of speed metal, hip-hop and comic books, Matthew's penchant for music and pop culture delicacies keep him awake into the wee hours of the night. Insomniacs unite.

2. DAVE SEGAL

Dave Segal dropped in Detroit 42 years ago, and experienced his first musical epiphany in 1968; those reverbed cowbells on the Chambers Brothers' "Time Has Come Today" really moved him. Since 1983, he's been spewing opinions in publications such as *Creem*, *Alternative Press*, *XLR8R*, *The Stranger*, *Stylus* and loads of weekly newspapers. As host of the *Cosmic Slop* and *Secret Ions* radio shows (WCSB, Cleveland, '96-'02), he also caused countless vehicular accidents and six cases of spontaneous combustion. Segal now lives in Seattle with thousands of records and his lovely girlfriend.

3. KIRA BUNSE

Kira Bunse was born in 1978, when an Israeli band called Izhar Cohen and the Alphabeta won the Eurovision song contest with a horrible number called "A-Ba-Ni-Bi." Cologne-based Bunse has done considerably better than Cohen. She's been doing freelance photography (in the fields of editorial, advertisement and fashion) since 1999, and has had her work published in *Self Service*, *I-D*, *Blackbook*, *Nylon* and *Spex*, among other magazines. Together with art director Eva Gödel, she also runs a modeling agency called Nine Daughters And A Stereo.

4. PAUL O'VALLE

Paul O'Valle has been rocking flicks for a solid decade now. In the past year he's begun to do work for publications that kick ass (*Interview*, *Tokion*, *XLR8R*), shooting photos of people that kick ass. I mean, come on...Talib Kweli! That kicks ass! www.o-vai-a.com

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Like us? Hate us? Write us! Email letters to letters@xlr8r.com or send mail to XLR8R Magazine 1388 Haight Street #105 San Francisco, CA 94117. All letters printed "as is."

BLAND BUFFET

I have to drop a contradiction to Matthew Newton's review of Grand Buffet's Pittsburgh Hearts (Issue #77, May 2004). He says "the rap duo of Jarrod Weeks and Jackson O' Connell-Barlow shows no love for popular opinion." Please! Bland Buffet are the epitome of jumping on the bandwagon—none of their "tongue-in-cheek rhymes" raise any new ideas nor do they "induce teary-eyed laughter." If you've heard their other stuff or seen their live shows, you'll know that this duo are riding the anti-conformist wave as a gimmick. They are like the guys who couldn't pull off being "punk" so now they are trying on the hip-hop hat. Don't buy into the hype, my dear XLR8R.

Marisha Rosenski

TOTAL VASTHOLE

Living in Manchester, I can only find one place to pick up your magazine (big up Fat City Records!). I love reading about the US underground hip-hop scene, but I was greatly disappointed by Vast Aire's words in issue # 77 (wicked picture of RJD2 on the front by the way). I was looking forward to reading the interview with Vast and seeing what he had to say about Can Ox as well as his new solo shit. Having read the interview several times now, I feel very let down by one of my favorite artists.

Having grown up very much a part of the heavy-metal underground "scene" here in the UK, I later discovered hip-hop away from the mainstream—Can Ox, Aesop, RJD2, Prefuse, Atmosphere—which my friends and I refer to, with all due respect, as the "underground."

The way I discover new artists and styles is from magazines and the Internet. The Internet

"THEY ARE LIKE THE GUYS WHO COULDN'T PULL OFF BEING 'PUNK' SO NOW THEY ARE TRYING ON THE HIP-HOP HAT."

acts as a great medium in order to feel a part of what's going on on the other side of the Atlantic. I love Can Ox, El-P, etcetera because they rap about more than just bitches and guns, combining intelligent lyrics and edgy beats. In my opinion, this makes them "underground" because they have enough nerve to try something different and braver than the mainstream.

Does the use of my PC and my opinion of good hip-hop make me a "nerd at home on my computer jerking my dick to what I think hip-hop is?" I guess so. I buy Can Ox and Vast's records, and go to their shows. Vast Aire talks about "keeping it real" and all that but I don't consider verbal attacks on those who support him and his work to be "keeping it real."

Also, hip-hop may be a "lifestyle," like he says, but it began as and remains a form of music. Like all music, you don't have to perform it to appreciate and love it; if that were the case, then why is Vast Aire making records for people to listen to? The money?

Coming from a family like Def Jux who pride themselves on being an independent label from the money-grabbing majors, it saddens and surprises me that Vast Aire feels the need to speak so unwisely and attack the idea of an "underground" scene. If Vast Aire doesn't like the people that buy his records and see his shows then fair enough, but then he shouldn't continue to expect the respect and support that he has previously commanded through his fantastic work.

James Sizer, Manchester, UK

CORRECTIONS In issue 78 we miscredited the photographer of the DKD feature. The photos were taken by Sam Barker. In issue #78, we got the label wrong for Moontrane Conductors' Emphysea release. It is on Egg Beats.

TYPE A

This was going to be a letter telling you that, although I like your new look for the most part, I don't like the most important part: the typeface you're using. Maybe I'm missing out on some weird retro design revolution or something, but when I read your 11th anniversary issue, I immediately felt like I was reading Newsweek. That typeface really has to go. If I wanted to look at less-than-beautiful type, I'd go read some Reader's Digest at grandma's. Even the white-on-yellow (or was it the other way around?) type was more of a pleasure to read...

I really like XLR8R—I have since the old oversize days—and in fact it's the only music magazine I can stomach anymore. But this trend of bad fonts is rather disturbing. Please tell me it won't be like this forever? And I'll say something positive to prove I'm not just a jaded old raver: the cover of the 11th b-day issue is HOT.

Chris Butler

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Entries will be accepted via mail and email. Send your answers to XLR8R's "Sweat The Technics" contest, 1388 Haight St. #105, San Francisco, CA 94117 or email them to contest@xlr8r.com. Include your name, return address and email address when you enter. Entries must be received by August 24, 2004.



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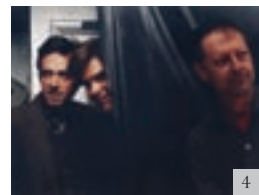
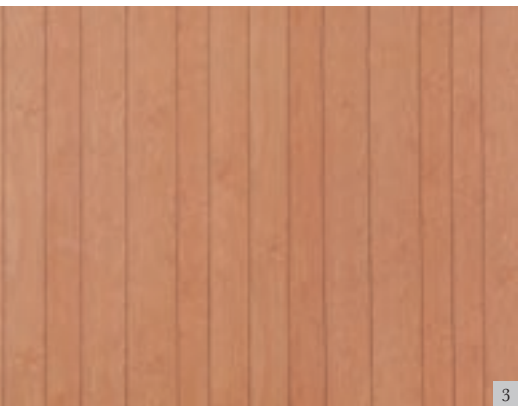
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POP CULTURE'S PAINFUL RETURNS



Recently, BJ "Bitter" Bastard has been so bitter that the negativity formed a circle and Bastard almost became a positive person. Not to fear. That didn't actually happen. Bastard—hopped on a quasi-lethal mixture of coffee, Quaaludes and Popeye's fried chicken, and exuding grease and cigarette fumes—is back for another round of the most painful things in pop culture. Get your Kleenex ready.

1. EBM: Okay, we totally liked Skinny Puppy's *Vivisect VI* as much as the next angst-ridden, pimply-faced teen, but do we really need to be re-referencing a genre whose initials often should have stood for Electronic Bowel Movement?

2. Club kid names: In San Francisco, they're already throwing "flashback" raves playing the music of 1998 and 1999. Next, everyone will be calling themselves by fake cartoon names like Mr. Owl and Cheshire and the Wonder Twins.

3. Wood paneling: This one goes hand-in-hand with the '70s revival. Soon, everything will look like those famous 1995 Calvin Klein ads, except without the hot underwear kids in underwear.

4. Dad punk: We don't know what hurts worse: Debbie Harry reviving herself or the recent crop of '80s punk bands that have decided to pick up the moldy, crust-covered towel from the floor from where they threw it in the early '90s. Boston's intense Mission of Burma is releasing a new album, as are Canadian punks Nomeansno. Meanwhile, some dads (Bad Religion, NoFX, Rancid) never left the biz for the barbecue.

5. Sparks: We don't know who decided that malt liquor could be the color of a Chernobyl spill, flavored like orange cough syrup and caffeinated, but I guess they were onto something because you can't stop all the hipsters from talking about it. It's like the Zima of now.

6. Snoop Dogg: Man, I liked Snoop too. But first the quitting weed thing, and then that horrible stereotypical movie *Soul Plane*, and now getting freaked by Britney in her new video. It's getting kind of embarrassing that the Doggfather will do *anything* to make that paper.

7. Von Dutch anything: One of our friends explained it best when he said, in an exasperated tone, "It's like...you see a hot girl and then she's wearing Von Dutch and you're like, 'Arrrrrgh.' It just kills it for you."

8. Darkwave: Seeking revenge on good music everywhere, all the goths got together and decided on a way to make trance worse—by adding really depressing, whiny, pathetic vocals over the beats (see: VNV Nation). Why, God? Why?

9. The new Felix Da Housecat album: Oh Devin Dazzle, did you really, really think that it would be okay to copy Le Tigre and no one would notice? No, really.

10. The Swan: Another travesty from the reliably scummy Fox Network, *The Swan* is the reality show where supposedly ugly women are given a ton of plastic surgery and then cruelly asked to compete in a beauty pageant. It's so addictive and so morally wrong it's hard to believe our government would crack down on drugs while this is around.

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TEXT: DAVID HEMINGWAY ILLUSTRATION: CHUCK ANDERSON FOR NOPATTERN

Though they describe their *modus operandi* prosaically—"We do one layer of keyboards, then another, then another," says band member Anthony Gonzalez—M83 creates music that is momentous and epic. Their songs are so full of otherworldly, ecclesiastic overtones as to make naming themselves after a distant galaxy totally appropriate.

Operating from their sun-drenched but "really boring" home in Antibes, France, Gonzalez and Nicolas Fromageau forge a modern melancholic synthesizer music equidistant from acknowledged influences Tangerine Dream and Mogwai. Their recently released second album, *Dead Cities, Red Sea and Lost Ghosts*, occasionally suggests a re-working of the late '80s phenomena of "dream pop" filtered through contemporary production techniques. But despite heavy electronic influences, Gonzalez prefers to perceive of his creations within the "rock" idiom. "We're like a rock band but one with synthesizers," he says. "When I was young I used to play in a noisy rock band. It was cool, like Sonic Youth. This record is one of noisy music. It's made with keyboards but it's noisy."

The pleasures of *Dead Cities, Red Sea and Lost Ghosts* are introduced by a computerized voice that recites "Sun is shining/Birds are singing/Flowers are growing/Clouds are looming/And I am flying" ("Birds"), but Gonzalez and Fromageau hardly sustain this sense of unfettered glee throughout the record.

"In life, I am a very happy guy," claims Gonzalez. "I play football, I like going to the beach, I have lots of friends—but what I appreciate the most in music is melancholy. I'm not a melancholic guy but I don't like happy songs except when the sun is shining and I can listen to the Beach Boys or the Mamas and Papas."

That isn't to say *Dead Cities, Red Sea and Lost Ghosts* is joyless, but its occasional rapturous moments are tempered by an overarching despondent mood. It's happy and sad, blissful and sombre. These contradictions are accentuated by an album sleeve that appears to feature children playfully creating snow angels...or are they infanticide victims resting in a snow-covered field? "You don't know if the four children are dead or if they're sleeping," explains Gonzalez. "I like this. You don't know how to think. It's a strange feeling, like [what you get when] listening to the album."

Many will have already been introduced to M83 via Jackson's Midnight F**k Remix of their "Run Into Flowers," which was notably sandwiched between tracks by Superpitcher and Thomas Schaeben & Gieger on the Michael Mayer-compiled *Fabric 13*. "I love that remix," he gushes. "I really love it. It's beautiful. It's entertaining."

"You know...I think you could dance to this remix," Gonzalez muses, sounding almost surprised by the idea.

"Have you ever danced to it?" I ask him.

"Maybe not danced," he ponders, "but I've moved a little."

Dead Cities, Red Sea and Lost Ghosts is out on Goom in Europe and released via Mute on July 27. www.mute.com, www.goom.com

Illustrated here: Nicolas Fromageau



OBSESSIONS: LUKE VIBERT

Luke Vibert's music is an amalgam of so many different influences that it makes perfect aural theater for those with attention deficit disorders. The recurring element of all his projects—whether the manic drum & bass jazz of Plug, the retro acid of his recent *YasepH* record (Warp), or his new Wagon Christ album for Ninja Tune, *Sorry I Made You Lush*—is an ability to rein in thousands of unrelated samples as they flit and weave like hummingbirds through brightly-colored breakbeat backdrops. No surprise, then, that Vibert is obsessed with Japan. The manic pace and cultural mash-up of the world's most futuristic capital city perfectly mirrors his multiple personalities (at least as far as music is concerned). Vibert's been to Japan numerous times, and he recently beamed this info about Tokyo to us through the magic of international telecommunications. *Tyra Bangs*

Luke Vibert on Japan:

The first time I went to Tokyo was in 1997; I was with Mike Paradinas (Mu-ziq) doing a few dates. These promoters took us out to all these crazy places—places I've never seen since. This one restaurant they took us to had some weird sashimi. The guy brought in a live fish and cut it up immediately and it was still flapping around and then we were supposed to eat from its body. I ate a tiny bit of the fish but I was just sure I was going to be sick because I had never even had sushi or anything like that before.

But we *did* love it and the gigs were wicked, and every time I've been back I've gotten more into it. Last time I was there, I went to this 24-hour shop at three in the morning. It was on the seventh floor of some anonymous looking building and had loads of things you'd never find anywhere else: clothes, sweets, and right next to the kids' toys there were loads of dildos and sex things. The odd collection of stuff in the shop transported me to some weird realm—I was there until about five in the morning.

Everything in Japan is designed better and it runs smoother, and people are more efficient and so polite. It feels futuristic but at the same time they hold onto their roots in a way that we don't. It just seems like everything's a bit tweaked there. Europe always feels backward in comparison.

Photo: Grubby



DOM & ROLAND

EPIC DRUM & BASS MASTER CONTINUES TO FIND HOPE IN TWISTED BEATS AND HEAVY BASSLINES.
WORDS: CHRIS MUNIZ

It's hard to believe it's been six years since Dominic Angas and his trusty Roland 760 sampler dropped the seminal *Industry* LP on the drum & bass masses. A brooding, ambitious album, it firmly announced the arrival of one of the finest talents the genre had ever seen, while pushing the production envelope. Since then, Angas has consistently redefined the scope of dark, technical drum & bass, but his latest full-length record is his most fully realized project to date.

Thick with hard beats, dark bass and cinematic atmospheres, *Chronology*—Dom & Roland's third album (and last for Moving Shadow)—is a stunning, high energy ride into the twisted and intricately textured dreamscape of the prodigal son all grown up. "I dream tunes a lot and I try and write them the next day, but it's hard to capture exactly what it is I hear in my head," says Angas. "This album is the closest I've ever come."

Featuring two massive collaborations with fellow deep-space travellers Skynet and Kemal, *Chronology* also showcases top-notch remixes from Calyx, Hive and Dieselboy that set the tone for damage still to come from this man. "With this album I really felt a new sense of energy and inspiration," Angas says. "The last one [*Back for the Future*] was more of a compilation, and it wasn't really my idea of an artist album, but this one definitely is."

From the anthemic "Dance All Night" to the deep and hypnotic "Break Out" to floor-killers like "Future Life" and "Freak Seen," he admits that most of the tunes on the album directly resulted from his absence from the scene in the last few years. "I never really went anywhere," Angas clarifies. "I've just been concentrating on this album and tinkering around with old vintage analog equipment. This whole switch that everyone's made from using samplers to doing it all in the computer [has] been weird, so I've just been trying to find a little niche to fit in."

Promising the best is yet to come, keep an eye out for Angas' self-titled imprint, which is set to debut before the year is out and features heavyweight collaborations with Photek, D-Bridge, Hive, Gridlok and Ryme Tyme. "I like digital and analog both," contends Angas contentedly, "and I think I've found a space where I can combine the best of both worlds."

Chronology is out now on Moving Shadow. www.movingshadow.com

Photo courtesy of S.O.M.A.

C/O POP FESTIVAL

"Cologne was always very different from Chicago and London," Kompakt's Michael Mayer has said of his adopted hometown. "We were looking for a different structure, more related to polka than James Brown." Between August 6 through August 22, Cologne's event makers, clubs and labels will celebrate the city's occasionally oompah-derived *maschine musik* via a series of concerts, parties, art installations and discussion panels under the banner of *c/o pop* (which stands for Cologne on Pop). Highlights of **Germany's first urban festival for electronic pop culture** include Mouse on Mars live, a Kompakt 100 night (featuring Le Petit Orb, Reinhard Voigt and Alter-Ego plus DJs Mayer, Tobias Thomas, Koze and Superpitcher) and open air sets from [non-residents] Richie Hawtin and Ricardo Villalobos. Organizers are also circumventing noise laws which prohibit open air concerts after 10:00PM through the distribution of portable radios tuned to the festival's program. "Most musicians see the festival in a relaxed way," says Mouse on Mars' Jan St. Werner. "If it works out, it's fine. If not, we'll [just] have another party [somewhere else]." *David Hemingway*

www.c-o-pop.de





GOTTA HAVE IT
THIS MONTH'S ESSENTIAL ACCESSORIES

1. Kid Robot Dunny (\$5.95)

Kid Robot recently wrapped up their Dunny Show at NYC's Visionaire Gallery, which featured versions of the shop's signature toy modified by Designer's Republic, Fafi, Heatherette, and Diane Von Furstenburg, among others. Some are still available through the website (at prices in the thousands), but the Robots are also releasing limited edition 3-inch Dunnys (by Frank Kozik, Lase, Superdeux, etc.) at the more affordable price of \$5.95. www.kidrobot.com

2. Friends With You Shoebaca doll (\$55)

According to the website, Shoebaca will "help with the toughest decisions you are making in life." More importantly, when you wake up next to him after a hard night of drinkin', he can loan you one of his two detachable kidneys. www.friendswithyou.com

3. Motorola E398 phone (\$TBA)

Why stand in a room listening to trance with a bunch of sweaty 15-year-olds when you can enjoy booming techno, flashing lights and pulsating strobes on your mobile phone? The E398 has all this, plus a vibrating effect that mimics the feeling of standing next to a subwoofer and the Motomixer app, in which you can remix existing ringtones or create original ones from scratch. www.hellomoto.com

4. Hersk White Trash Charms shoe (\$245)

LA's Hersk and celeb faves White Trash Charms co-designed these next-level casual kicks as part of American Rag CIE's Art in Revolution series. Available at American Rag CIE in San Francisco and Los Angeles. www.hersk.com, www.whitetrashcharms.com

5. Lmac.tv Trucker Hats (\$35)

The rules concerning trucker hats are so up in the air these days, but it's okay to wear one as long as a) it's in a non-ironic fashion and b) the hat has some decent graphics. This applies to these trucker caps from Singapore's LMAC in tandem with Flying Fortress, Project Alpha and Freakclub. www.lmac.tv

6. Gravis Black Box gPod case (\$25) and camo gPod case (\$15)

From Black Box, Gravis' elite new line designed by Jono Wood, comes this full-grain white leather iPod case designed to caress your favorite toy when you're not busy tiddling with it. By toy, we mean iPod. Also comes in a canvas camo version. www.gravis.com



Photo: Justin William Lin

FIVE STAR
NEW YORK'S TECHNO
MAINSTAY JOHN
SELWAY PICKS HIS
MUST-HAVE ITALO-
DISCO CLASSICS.

You may know East Coast electronic music don John Selway from his productions with Christian Smith and Abe Duque, his 2001 album *Edge of Now* (Ultra), his DJ sets or his time behind the counter at New York's Satellite Records. But Selway has another abiding musical passion outside of techno and electro. "I have way too many Italo and Euro-electro/disco records," he says. "I've been seriously seeking them out for about the last five years or so, and I've managed to find most of the rare classics I've desired. However, there are a handful of extremely elusive originals I still haven't yet managed to dig up." Here are his top five most wanted of the moment. *Vivian Host* www.selwaymusic.net, www.memoryboy.org

1. Sun La Shan "Catch" (Superradio)

This track, featured on I-F's *Mixed Up From The Hague Vol. 1*, has become extremely sought after—it often shows up on eBay and the bids have gone in to the hundreds. I won't pay that much, though; I'm holding out for one of those magic dollar-bin moments. Anyway, this record is deserving of all the hype with its twisted, pulsating synths and effects, driving 808 disco beats, vocoded robotic nonsense and sex kitten vocals by Ms. Sun La Shan herself. It's tripped out and it rocks.

2. Stopp "I'm Hungry" (Disco Magic)

Another psycho "what the hell are they talking about" Italo freak-out. I really can't figure out what they're singing most of the time, but it doesn't matter. The Carumba mix is the one to go for: crazy dubbed-out reversed edits and effects over an already strange song. The beats and bass jack as well as any early Chicago house track.

3. Simonetti, Morante, Pignatelli "Tenebre" b/w "Flashing" (Cinevox)

These are incredible disco and electro versions of tracks from the soundtrack to the Italian horror movie *Tenebre*. Simonetti, Morante and Pignatelli were members of the group Goblin, which produced many other soundtracks for Italian films in the '70s and '80s. My favorite here is "Flashing"; it's a literally epic, very far out and dark electro space jam.

4. Steel Mind "Boss Man" (RS)

This is a very, very rare, stripped down, slow and minimal electro/New Wave rock track with the occasional guitar stab thrown in, echoing bleeps and dark chords. The flip is even more out there, and sounds a bit along the lines of late '70s space disco. Really amazing and damn near impossible to get.

5. Travel Sex "I Want Your Sexiness" (Disco Magic)

OK, this is just pure Euro sleaze. It's *so* bad, yet I totally love it. You just know the guy singing is wearing a leather jacket with too many zippers, greases his hair and has a really bad mustache. I'm pretty sure most people would be completely repulsed by this song. So let this be a warning to any potential Italo-disco collectors out there: It's an addiction and it sucks you in and you start making excuses for really bad songs with comments like "Yeah, but the production's really cool and the beats were programmed on a Roland MC-4." Dive in at your peril.



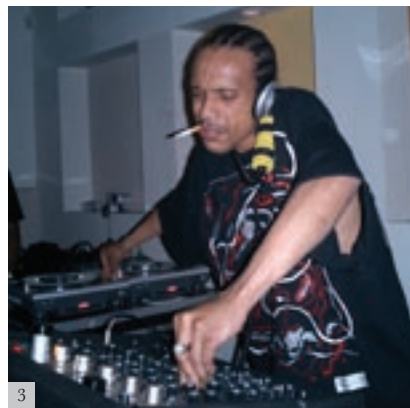
**DETROIT,
ON THE
MOVIE**



Blind faith in organizer Derrick May helped bring thousands to Detroit's Hart Plaza for the fifth annual **Movement Festival** (Memorial Day weekend: May 28-31, 2004). On sheer reputation alone, thousands of techno pilgrims from as far away as Tokyo and Amsterdam planned trips to the party formerly known as DEMF whose 70-plus artists remained unannounced until May 11th. Complications such as the firing of partners, a shortage of cash, no major sponsor and deficient support from city government resulted in what one anonymous volunteer called "an organizational train wreck."

Though attendance ran slightly shy of previous years, insider drama went unnoticed as the first funk-laden rhythms of Amp Fiddler's theatrical performance (the festival's highlight) lit up a packed amphitheater that included locals Ayro, Lacks and Reclouse in attendance. The "High-Tech Soul" stage also featured inspired turns from Jaylib (Jay Dee & Madlib) on Saturday, the Platinum Pied Pipers on Sunday and Reclouse on Monday.

As usual, Movement was a prime showcase for legendary Detroit talents. Spread across five stages were luminaries including Underground Resistance's



Rolando, event organizer Kevin Saunderson and masterminds like Alton Miller, Mike Huckaby and Mike Clark. But Detroiters—like fellow festival performers DJ Genesis and Beatdown Sounds' DJ Koric—were most excited to check out international talent like François K and Danny Krivit.

The festival was a decisive success, with the usual range of pre- and after-parties exposing notables who did not make the 2004 line-up, including Theo Parrish, Gene Hunt and Miami's techno-dub trio Agape. One act that debuted Sunday morning came as a surprise even to Derrick May—his girlfriend went into labor three weeks early on Saturday afternoon. Their baby girl was born at 3:45 AM, marking the most momentous of after-hour events. *Jessica Perri*

1. Madlib; 2. singer of Agape; 3. Gene Hunt

**NEXT BIG THING:
BRUNO
PRONSATO**

A military brat who spent the '80s and '90s as a punk-metal drummer, Seattle-based Steven Ford (a.k.a. Bruno Pronsato and Bobby Karate) has morphed into one of the most adventurous microsound and tech-house producers you haven't heard of yet. But momentum is building. Karate's 2003 disc, *Hot Trips, Cold Returns*, first revealed Ford's mercurial glitch 'n' guts skills. Now, Ford's debut full-length as Bruno Pronsato, *Silver Cities* (Orac), embarks on an ambitiously askew foray into tech-house, one that promises to gouge the earwax out of DJs rocking Perlon and Logistic platters. Craig Richards (alias Tyrant) recently placed Ford's "Read_Me" on his *Fabric 15 (House Radio Mix)* between Horror Inc. and Matthew Dear.

"[A] lot of the tracks that wound up on *Silver Cities* were direct products of my being so obsessed with [classical piano composers] Schoenberg and Webern the last year and a half," Ford says. **"So, when I wasn't obsessed with crafting a straight dance track, I was obsessed with making a 12-tone techno track."** The results are anything but arid experimentation. Rather, *Silver Cities* bumps, swerves and throbs with a brainy salaciousness. Prosaic? No. Pronsato? Yes. *Dave Segal*



PROPTRONIX
SAFETY SCISSORS INVITES
YOU TO A PLASTIC, POTEMKIN
VILLAGE OF DORKCORE WITH
HIS PROPTRONIX SCHEME

WORDS: CAMERON MACDONALD
PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER WOODCOCK

Matthew Curry has a recurring vision. "[I see] a furniture store room with a fake environment that's supposed to represent a real living room," he explains over the phone. "It's filled with fake electronic props like plastic VCRs, computers and stuff like that." Curry imagines the soundtrack to these rooms as "fake" electronic music—a premise that his Proptronix label keenly explores. To wit, Proptronix releases include game show ditties punctuated by vomiting, microhouse inspired by pigeon dancing and the chronicles of one lad's infatuation with Michael Jackson. Profiles of young, fertile mail-order brides adorn the Proptronix website, further confusing things. "[The concept of 'fake' electronic music] is just something that makes people scratch their heads and investigate a bit further," Curry confesses. "It's about creating the genre first, and having the music fill it in."

Proptronix arose in 2001, when the SF Bay Area-based Curry—who regularly performs laptop trickery as Safety Scissors—noticed something missing from electronic music. "It's still hard to find dance music that has a sense of humor," says the maestro, who is known for throwing his glitch techno into a Chuck-E-Cheese ball bin before releasing it. His label's debut 12-inch was similarly cheeky—a gelatinous number from Pigeon Funk, the microhouse project of comrades Kit Clayton and Sutekh. Though the record fell into many hands, it was followed by a lengthy hibernation period for the imprint. "It was a lot easier back then to start a label and be fairly successful," Curry explains.

Proptronix was recently revived via a production and distribution deal with Kompakt, which has led to the releases of Pigeon Funk's album debut (with Curry now a pigeon dancer) and EPs by fellow dorkcore artists My Robot Friend, PJ Pooterhoots and Jackstone. My Robot Friend (the alias of New York humanoid Howard Robot) devises electro-pop jingles that dabble in rockabilly and Oingo Boingo-style melodrama. PJ Pooterhoots' contribution to humanity, *Barf (Liebe Meine)*, eroticizes regurgitation with electro-funk grooves. And then there's Geoff White, whose Jackstone guise performs vaguely familiar minimal techno covers of Peter Pan pop hits like "Don't Stop" and "Billy Jean." Curry explains that each release has a "concept." For example, the upcoming second volume of the *Electronic Pants* compilation is dedicated to artists' visions of "electric pants that can be turned on for super-speed dancing, special jumping powers or special pocket organization."

Curry plans to release albums this fall by My Robot Friend (who recently suped-up his synchronized light suit for shows), Stop Disco Mafia, and long-time pal Sutekh, whose new project is high-concept, if not high art. "In high school, (Sutekh) had these weird noise collages of samples from commercials and horror movies that were really dorky," explains Curry of the pair's The Tape of Death collaboration. "We're going to edit that down and make new tracks out of that."

Fake Electronix Catalog Vol. 1 and the *Pigeon Funk!* compilation are out now. www.proptronix.com



REVIEWS : RADIKAL

ATB NO SILENCE

The highly anticipated fifth artist album from DJ extraordinaire ATB showcases his talent and diversity as a producer. Not only does it include the soaring trance anthems which he is famous for, but also includes full vocal songs, powerful atmospheric chill-out tracks, and tracks that border on the territory of

alternative rock. Includes the hot new single *Marrakech* and a special bonus DVD full of videos and extras. A must-have for all electronic music fans. *Jim Nasium*

VARIOUS SPACE IBIZA

The official 2004 compilation from Club Space in Ibiza includes the biggest current hits from this world renowned clubbers destination. Mixed by long time resident DJs Voodoo & Serano, it perfectly captures the spirit of Ibiza, and let's you feel the sensation wherever you normally listen to music. Tracks by

Armand Van Helden, Lee Cabrera, Milk & Sugar, Amuka, Plastic Nation, Overdub, Frank Savaro, Dan Tanner and others are featured. The best Space Ibiza compilation ever! *Paige Turner*

VOODOO & SERANO BACK FOR MORE

A special re-issue of the debut album by Voodoo & Serano, this new package includes 3 previously unreleased tracks as well as a bonus DVD full of unseen V & S videos and exclusive Ibiza footage. One of the hottest DJ teams in

Europe, and long time resident DJs at Club Space in Ibiza, Voodoo & Serano are best well-known for their club hits *Blood Is Pumpin'*, *Slide To The Vibe*, *This Is Acid* and *Overload*, all of which are included in this essential edition. Hard trance and techno at it's finest. *Bill Ding*

HIBERNATE OCD

Aside from mystical melodic passages and groovy progressive beats, Canadian newcomer Hibernate, pulls off a hypnotic tech sound evocative of Dirty Vegas, BT, and the Pet Shop Boys. Debut album *OCD's* obsessive compulsive music is full of infectiously catchy melodies imposed over brooding

moods and deeply moving rhythms. Stand-out tracks from this smoothly flowing album include *Submit*, *Lost In Space*, and *Not So Blue*. *Claire Voyant*

radikal.com
 Get a free Hibernate *Submit* CD with any purchase of \$15.00 or more. Enter coupon code **29fzkjdc**
 Expires 10/31/04

VIDEOGAME REVIEWS



Psi-Ops (PS2/Xbox; Midway, \$49.99)

At first, *Psi-Ops* seems like another typical shoot 'em up game—and it sort of is, but with an interesting twist. Once you get through the initial levels, you start to acquire special mind powers, among them telekinesis, pyrokinesis, mind control and remote viewing. These powers let you pick up and move objects and enemies and throw them around or set them on fire; you can even possess an enemy's body. Sound like hot shit? Well, it is. The effort here has definitely been put into graphics and playability. Not so much time has been spent on the music and voiceovers, although the realistic sound effects make keeping the volume up worth it. All in all, this is a refreshing take on a classic game genre. It makes for an absolutely enjoyable geek-end trip, a nice change from my usual two-day hand-in-the-pants seminar. *Kenny Dale*



Red Dead Revolver (PS2/Xbox; Rockstar, \$49.99)

"The good, the bad, and the ugly" applies in more ways than one to *Red Dead Revolver*, the new western game from the no-holds-barred programmers at Rockstar. The graphics are often times "the bad," with some pretty jagged-looking surfaces and clunky yet copious blood spurts when foes are shot up. "The ugly" applies to the various bad-boy outlaws you run into during the course of this linear adventure, which consists mainly of third-person quests and special slow-mo shoot-out sequences. But "the good" is definitely the gameplay—if you're not a graphics snob, you'll be addicted to the storyline and easy controls in minutes. *Andrew Smith*

IN-CONSOLE-ABLE

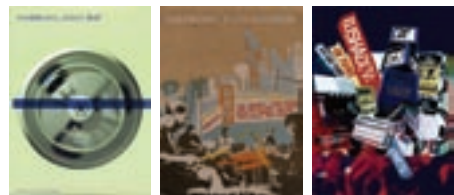
You're a goddamn geek, admit it! Now find yourself at the massive **E3 Conference**, the world's largest annual gathering of video game developers and their fans, held in Los Angeles. After being overwhelmed with gigantic video screens and booth babes galore, here's what you saw. *Andrew Smith*
www.e3expo.com

1. Willing participants sandwiched between female wrestlers; 2. "Were those the geeks we're looking for?"; 3. Time out for the amazonian babe from *Prince of Persia 2* and three Daisy Dukes; 4. The pimped-out gaming area of the *Driver 3* booth; 5. In the top secret *Getting Up* graf-writing game demo we saw tags from Futura, Shep Fairey and Kaws; 6. Dance steps captured in mid-air; 7. A developer behind zombie game, *Dead Rush*, with vampire babe in tow; 8. 50 Cent's customized PS2; 9. Fuzzy hugs; 10. The ButtKicker attaches to your computer chair and vibrates with every gun shot ... sigh; 11. Although they were everywhere, the real army folks were much less intimidating than this fake one (right); 12. Seriously OG, this pink-haired guy is playing an early '80s text adventure game, *Zork*.





1. Tim Hope from Onedotzero;
2. Keepintime



SLIPPED DISCS
XLR8R REVIEWER TYRA BANGS
PUSHES PLAY ON THREE NEW DVDS
THAT PROMISE TO TITILLATE YOUR
VISUAL CORTEX.

GROUND ZERO In the eight years since Resfest debuted its groundbreaking digital filmmaking festival, motion graphics have increasingly become the new frontier in graphic design. Onedotzero is one of the best places to peep new advances in the genre; the collective's DVD compilations periodically collect the best in music videos, animations and short films (from mostly British and Japanese collaborators) onto one disc. **Onedotzero select DVD 2: Adventures in Moving Image** (Onedotzero/Blackchair; \$30), the second installment in the series, features beautiful images from Brazil's Lobo, London's Shynola and Tokyo's Power Graphixx, as well as compelling animated short stories from Chris Shephard, Tim Hope and Nakao Hiroyuki. For further inspiration, the collective also has a new book out called **Motion Blur** (hardcover; Laurence King Publishing, £30), which investigates the creative process behind the work of 28 digital filmmaking superstars from around the world through interviews, storyboards and, of course, an accompanying DVD.

www.microcinema.com



DRUM ROLL Two years after the film first screened—and four years since the original jam session that inspired the movie—**Keepintime** (Mochilla; \$25) is finally released on DVD. The flick chronicles a live collaboration between legendary jazz and funk session drummers and the DJs who have been inspired by their breaks, including J-Rocc, Babu and Cut Chemist. Directed by famed hip-hop photographer B+ and partner Eric Coleman, the footage has a lovely understated feel and it's interesting to watch the originators weigh in on turntablism's new frontier. Nonetheless, its drum-centric subject matter will most appeal to hardcore scratch enthusiasts, cymbal aficionados and those obsessed with the origins of their dusty record collections. An additional CD includes remixes from Charlie Dark, Ammon Contact, DJ Nobody and more.

www.keepintime.com

SHADOW PLAY If you're an independent hip-hop fan, you've inevitably found yourself standing around at a show, wishing you could be watching the action at home and toking heavily from your handblown glass piece instead of nodding your head uncomfortably with that heavy backpack on. If that sounds familiar, you will enjoy the new DJ Shadow DVD **In Tune and On Time** (Geffen; \$24.98). The flick combines footage from a two-hour live performance (shot in 2002 at London's Brixton Academy) with interviews, behind-the-scenes shots and an accompanying audio CD with tracks from UNKLE and Blackalicious. Not to disappoint the scratch-happy among you, *In Tune...* also documents a legendary wax battle between Shadow, Cut Chemist and DJ NuMark.

www.djshadow.com



TREVOR LOVEYS

BROKEN BEAT, DEEP HOUSE AND DOWNTempo ALL GET LOVED UP BY ONE OF LONDON'S MOST VERSATILE PRODUCERS.

WORDS: PETER NICHOLSON

Slick deep house as House of 909 for Pagan Records. Smooth downtempo breaks as Second Nature for Alola. Techier business for Front Room. Trevor Loveys is the man behind a ton of grooves and his new solo album, *Intastella*, on Freerange Records proves there's plenty more to come.

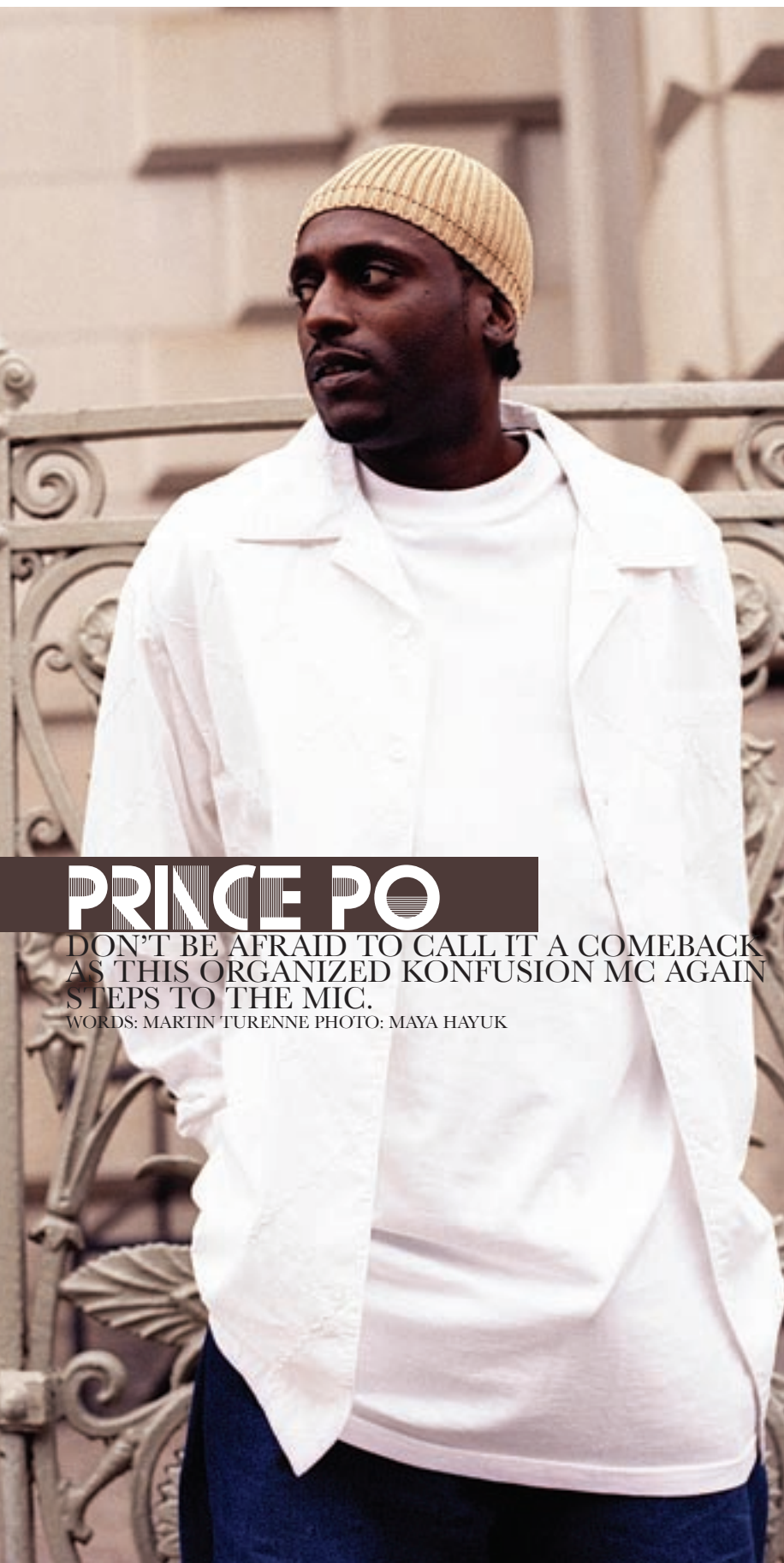
In addition to the requisite stream of singles getting charted by selectors as diverse as Ben Watt and Plump DJs, Londoner Loveys is that rare breed of producer who has also managed to put together several well-received albums. In 1998, Loveys famously partnered with Nigel Casey for House of 909's *The Children We Were*, and a year later collaborated with Chris Pedley on Second Nature's *Era*. Loveys is on his own for *Intastella*, although Freerange boss Jamie "Jimpster" Odell lent the odd inspiration or two. "I got a lot of ideas down and then went into the studio," explains Loveys over his mobile. "There were things that I wanted to work on, get some live drums down, etcetera and Jamie's been a real help. Sometimes it takes someone else to hear something."

What listeners hear on *Intastella* are fat, rubbery basslines wrapped around crisp

drum programming that runs from straight up four-on-the-floor ("Feel The Horns") to chopped broken beats ("Planetary Vibes"). Sleek keys and vocals, whether soulful lyrics or processed samples, also play roles in Loveys' compositions, but his chief characteristic is a clean style that's as much about what isn't there as what is. "I think [a signature sound] is something that comes with time, just the way you EQ stuff," says Loveys. "I don't like overcrowding something. If I just get the core elements that I'm into right, that's the way I do my sound. And then...there's loads of plug-ins!" he adds with a laugh.

Despite Loveys' years of trial and error in the studio, he's well aware that sometimes the best tracks are just fortuitous accidents. Such was the case with last year's "Get Ya Dub On," which he made as Switch (with Dave Taylor of Solid Groove). "We spent a lot of time getting this one track really how we wanted it, and after that we just wanted to just have a laugh throwing samples around," Loveys recalls. "We were just jamming, we'd had a couple of beers, and ["Dub"] just came together." Easygoing and quick to laugh, he doesn't seem fazed by "Dub"'s success. If you have a versatile talent like Loveys, the odd club hit is just a matter of perseverance—and a wicked bassline.

Intastella is out now on Freerange Records. www.freerangerrecords.co.uk



Standing at the corner of Flash and Independence Streets, the artist formerly known as Prince Poetry cuts a striking figure. Armed with a mic and a backpack full of wax, the former Organized Konfusion MC is back on the job, if only on his own terms.

"I'm going back to the grind," announces the author of *The Slickness*. "I'm just trying to be very humble and make up for the years that I've been missing."

Posted up outside the game since 1997, the Queens-based rapper watched his homeboy Pharoahe Monch struggle under the weight of expectation, unable to maintain the momentum generated by his 1999 club smash, "Simon Says." Where his former Organized collaborator has found post-Rawkus salvation in the arms of Eminem's Shady Records, Po has concocted a debut album which bears all the marks of an underground classic. Buttressed by beats from the middleground's leading lights (including Madlib, J-Zone and Danger Mouse) and burnished by Po's imagistic verses, *The Slickness* stands among the best comeback records in rap history, announcing the return of a man in touch with his inner freak.

"Organized was always known for being subtle," says Po of the high-minded duo. "A lot of Organized fans might have expected me to stay on the same tip, but times have changed. Life is faster, so I'm hitting my points harder."

Lest heads fear Po's return is littered with vacuous club nonsense, they need only listen to such Technicolor bangers as "Social Distortion" (featuring MF Doom), which finds the rapper reflecting on life under Uncle Sam's jackbooted foot. Reminding us that we're all just "monkeys in moshpits," Po contends that patriotism only airbrushes our homegrown injustices.

"I'm a slave before I'm an American," he declares. "Right after 9/11, we was all waving flags and loving each other, but a week later I can't catch a fucking cab from Manhattan to Queens. That's still the reality of being a black man in this city."

As the head of his own production company, Nasty Habits Entertainment, Po will soon be releasing *Many Styles*, a compilation showcasing his stable of talented linguists. With Lex Records on his back and a new Organized album on the way, 2004 may well be remembered as the year Po blew up.

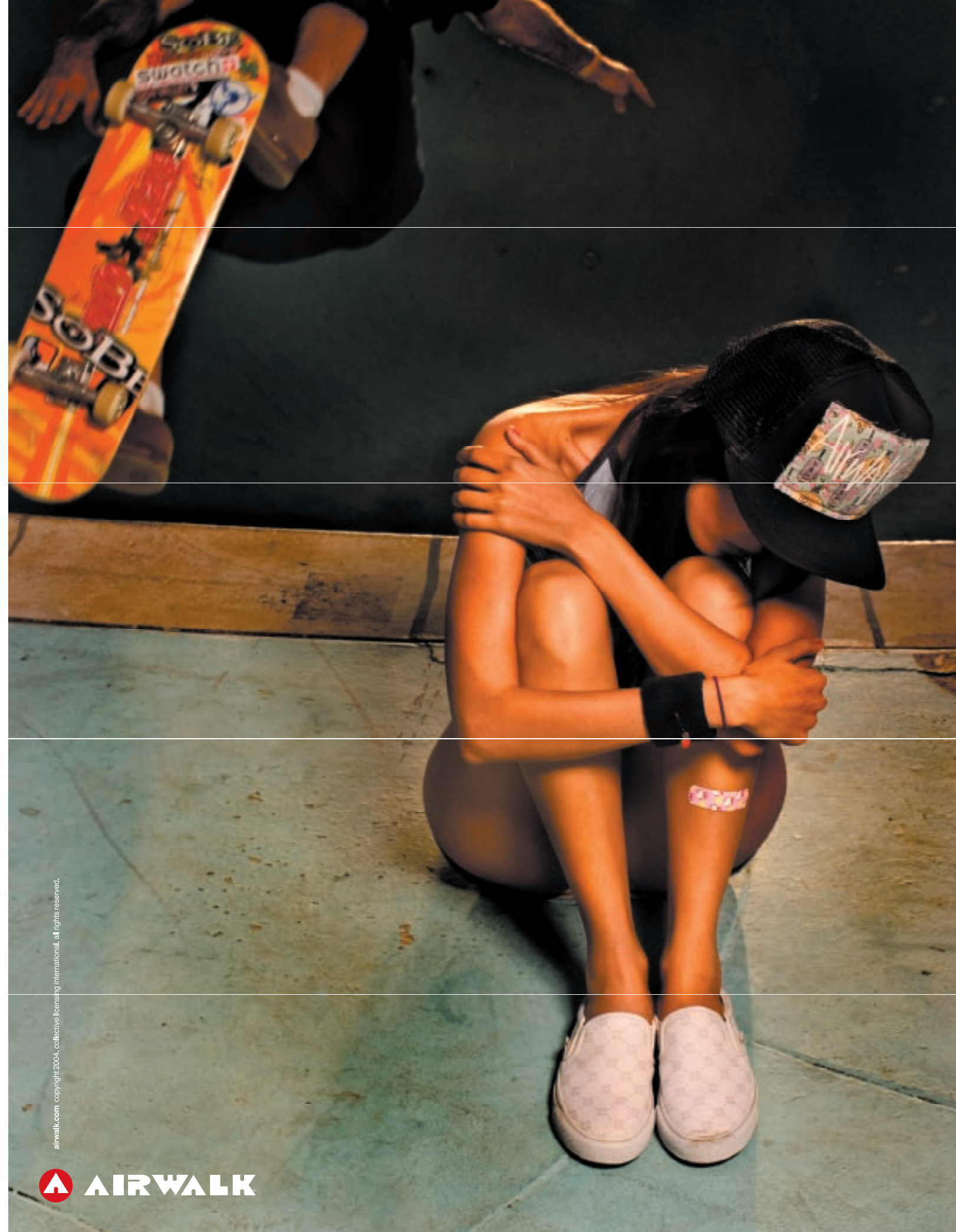
"Trust me," he confides with glee. "Once I come back out, I'm not going nowhere."

The Slickness is out now on Lex Records. www.lexrecords.com

PRINCE PO

DON'T BE AFRAID TO CALL IT A COMEBACK AS THIS ORGANIZED KONFUSION MC AGAIN STEPS TO THE MIC.

WORDS: MARTIN TURENNE PHOTO: MAYA HAYUK



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COVER VERSIONS
GRAPHIC DESIGN VETERAN TONY MCDERMOTT STANDS BEHIND REGGAE'S BRIGHT AND BASHY LOOK.

Little remains constant in the ever-changing rapids of Jamaican music. One exception is Tony McDermott, the man behind the seminal artwork of UK reggae label Greensleeves. Over three decades the designer has brought his distinctive touch to albums by Burning Spear, Augustus Pablo, Yellowman, Eek-A-Mouse, Sizzla, Elephant Man and a cast of other stars too numerous to mention.

"I was always fascinated by comic books as a child," says McDermott, 45. "I loved drawing and eventually went on to get a degree in design from the London College Of Printing. I moved to London from Lancashire in 1978 and a growing obsession with black music in all its forms—particularly soul, funk and reggae—led to me getting a regular weekly [comic] strip in *Black Echoes* magazine around that time."

"Greensleeves had just begun to issue their own releases, and they asked for some cartoons for a couple of covers," he continues. "Initially my work was illustrative, but then I began to take an increasingly graphic approach. Over time, I gradually took on all Greensleeves' work, plus all the design for Ariwa, the Mad Professor's label (which involved more than 100 covers over a period of about 10 years), plus assorted sleeves for VP Records in New York, Jet Star in the UK, and a lot for Discafrique's Zimbabwean output

in the '80s, including the Bhundu Boys. I've probably designed 700 covers for the reggae market over the past 25 years!"

Progressing from Greensleeves' classic cartoon-style "Carnival of Reggae History" 12-inch sleeve, McDermott's graphic work is best displayed via the scintillating array of covers he has provided for the label's series of rhythm albums. Full of eye-popping color, blocky typefaces and pulsating imagery, this epic body of work captures dancehall's energy perfectly, making each CD a genuine stand-alone artifact. With the rhythm albums past their 50th release, McDermott has opted for a fresh, new look, but fans will not be disappointed—it's as bright, breezy and bashy as ever.

"On a music project, the driving force can be the album title, artist's name or existing image and any photographic sources I get," adds McDermott. "Obviously the graphics need to match the music—not many flowers or kittens required on dancehall projects—so I listen to music nearly all the time I'm working. It's a huge inspiration." *Dave Stelfox* www.greensleeves.net



BROOKS
DERBY HOUSE PROVOCATEUR PUTS THE PASSION BACK IN HOUSE MUSIC'S PULSE.
WORDS: DAVID HEMINGWAY PHOTO: HELEN WOODS

Youthful house producer Andrew Brooks's initial experiments in music making involved cutting up his father's substantial Barbara Streisand collection on a primitive sampler, a practice for which the musician has since admitted he was "quite rightly bullied." Despite the beatings, Brooks was not discouraged, releasing his first track, "Electric Dance Machine," on the DIY Discs compilation *2922 Days* at the age of 16.

Drawing on disco, micro-house and R&B—and juxtaposing polished new wave grooves with a dextrous disco twirl—Brooks' subsequent debut album, *You, Me & Us* (Mantis), was an atypical house long-player. The album's title track—written and performed with regular Herbert collaborator Dani Siciliano—initially sounded like an affectionate and loving paean, but actually turned out to be about obsession and self-mutilation. And lyrics like "*Jesus wants me for a sunbeam/The ninjas want me on their crack*

team/All this before I'm seventeen/Fingers crossed it's all a bad dream" ("Dripping In Gold") suggested a droll playfulness not always apparent in house music. Now the Derby, United Kingdom-based Brooks announces his forthcoming album, *Red Tape*, with a song about gay sex. "*I know that you're thinking it's a sin, see,*" declares Brooks' vocal interpreter Clyde, "*But I know you want to put it in me.*"

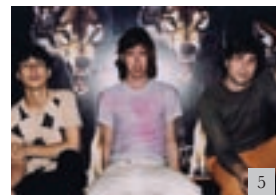
"I had this weird moment of relating sex to math and how things fit together," explains Brooks of the genesis of "Do The Math." "It's autobiographical to a certain extent. It's asking questions from my point of view about why certain people are averse to certain aspects of sexuality. There's a little bit of anger in there. There's anger directed at bigots and small-minded people. It's not going to change the world or make any great waves but it's quite satisfying to be able to say, 'It's about being dirty more than anything.'"

Tellingly, Brooks has backed the track with an interpretation of PJ Harvey's "Mansize," created entirely from samples of two packets of Kleenex tissues. "I'm completely in love with her," Brooks

claims of the songwriter. "I have been since I was a teenager. It just seemed to me to be a comment on repressed sexuality, and I thought by changing a few words from female to male, it became this song about repressed gay sexuality. [While making it] I basically stood in the studio with the floor covered in tissues."

The tissues make an apt metaphor for such an emotional album, but don't try to read a political message into the record, despite its *Red Tape* title. "I wouldn't say [the album is] political," explains Brooks. "I'm interested [in politics] to a certain extent but I'm not really up on it. It's more of a social thing, about general attitudes in society which I don't feel are right. There was a burning anger inside that I needed to get out."

Red Tape is out in August on Soundlike Recordings. www.magicandaccident.com



SPIN CYCLE
NEWS AND GOSSIP FROM THE MUSIC WORLD

In August, the Eighth Annual **Air Guitar World Championships** will be held in Northern Finland. **DJ Nu-Mark** and production partner **Pomo** will release an all-instrumental album of hip-hop beats, called *Blend Crafters*, on Up Above Records on July 27. **DJ Cosmo**, label head of **Bitches Brew**, has just announced she's pregnant. Catch her last round of DJ gigs at the 10 Days Festival in Ghent, Belgium, and the Stigmatic Festival in Warsaw, Poland. **Outkast** has announced plans to release a new album in November, produced by **Organized Noize**, and a film in May of 2005. Arguably Chicago's most famous dance music record store, **Gramophone**, celebrated its 35th birthday in May. **Morrissey's** most recent album, *You Are The Quarry*, is his highest charting ever, eclipsing both his efforts with **The Smiths** and his solo releases. DJ gear company **Shure** is launching **Vinyl Kombat**, the first DJ competition open to all ages and held in all-ages venues. The finals will be held in September. **Truth**, the national youth smoking prevention campaign, will be touring the US this summer and giving away hot limited edition t-shirts by **Typestereo**, **Mr. Cartoon** and **Michael Leon**. Check dates at www.thetruth.com. **L'Altra**, the other project of **Telefon Tel Aviv** and **Slicker** singer **Lindsay Anderson**, will have a new album out on Hefty in January 2005 and an EP

out this fall. **New Order** is reportedly working on a new album, the follow up to 2001's rather unmemorable *Get Ready*. Speaking of synth: **The Cure** has enlisted **Interpol**, **Mogwai** and festival sluts **The Rapture** to join them on their Curiosa tour, set to span the U.S. from late July through late August. The band will also be releasing their 13th album on June 27 and some reissues in mid-August. **The Altoids Curiously Strong Collection** is touring the States for its sixth year, including works by Iona Rozeal Brown, Mala Iqbal and Conrad Bakker; it will visit the Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia in July and New York's New Museum of Contemporary Art in the fall. On April 26, **I Am The World Trade Center** singer **Amy Dykes** was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease and is currently undergoing chemotherapy. We wish her well. The new video from **The Liars**, "They Fenced Other Gardens With the Bones of Our Own," is directed by **Karen O** from the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Director **Greg Spotts** explores the pitfalls of the American economy in his documentary, *American Jobs*, which will be released on Labor Day, September 6. **Quannum** ringleader and hyphy rapper **Lyrics Born** and singer **Joyo Velarde** blissfully tied the knot in May in San Francisco, California. Virtu is a thrice-yearly music subscription service compiling music from the likes of **RJD2**, **The Notwist** and **Herbert** with limited-edition collectible packaging from cutting-edge visual artists. Check it at www.virtu.tv. A **Negativland** mash-up of *The Passion of The Christ* is available via P2P download. Find out more at www.negativland.com, as well as information on a new book, *The Spam Letters* (No Starch), from collaborator Jonathan Land, which chronicles hilarious correspondence between Mr. Land and all the people who send him mass junk emails. Read up on what's going down in South Africa at www.kush.co.za. Check out **Infinitive Livez's** video for "The Adventures of the Lactating Man" at www.ninjatune.net. Hip-hop fans have a new online mag to turn to at www.pulsegrafx.com. For the latest sounds from New York, check out www.eastvillageradio.com.

1. David Jung, 2003 Air Guitar World Champion; 2. Infinitive Livez (Tom Oldham); 3. L'Altra's Lindsay Anderson; 4. Andre from Outkast; 5. The Liars; 6. Morrissey; 7. Karen O; 8. Andre Ulriksen, 2003 Air Guitar World Champion Runner-Up; 9. Robert Smith from The Cure

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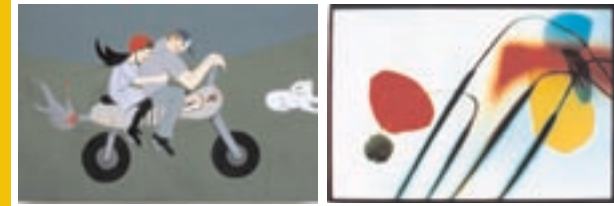
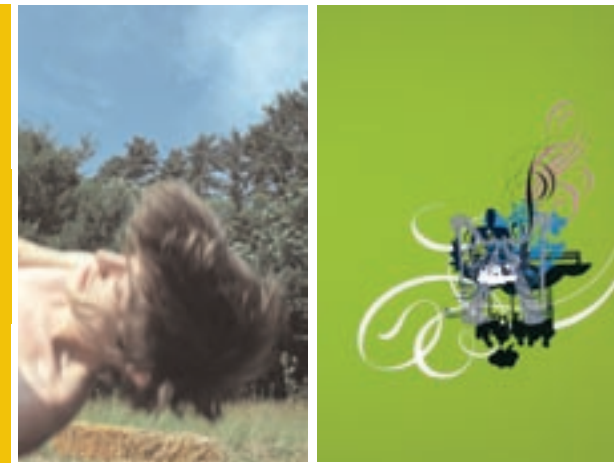
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KOMPAKT OPENS UP

Who and what is behind techno's global resurgence? The answer lies in Cologne, Germany, inside the mysterious, milk-white walls of a compound called **Kompakt**.

Words: Philip Sherburne
Photos: Kira Bunse

Church bells signal my arrival in Cologne, which is appropriate—my trip to what I've jokingly called “techno Mecca” feels like a pilgrimage of sorts. Having gone straight from an early-morning flight to my hotel for a badly needed nap, I've been asleep for an hour or two when I hear the bells ringing from a steeple just a few blocks from my hotel.

As they chime, they build into an increasingly complex pattern that sounds almost like techno itself: *Dong DONG dong-dong DONG*, like some strange liturgical dub. In my hypnagogic state, the sound seems to broadcast some polyphonic message in code. As the clanging builds and echoes overlap each other, it suddenly occurs to me where I have heard this quality before—in the shimmering dream-pop of Superpitcher, who shrouds his songs in layer upon layer of backwards-spun gongs and chimes.

“So it's true—there really *is* a sound of Cologne,” I think, before sinking back into a dreamless void.

The Sound of Cologne

The “Cologne sound,” of course, has long been synonymous with one label: Kompakt. Kompakt was born in 1995 as a means of consolidating the expanding array of labels (Trance Atlantic, N'TA, Profan, Freiland, Auftrieb) and artist pseudonyms (Mike Ink, Love Inc., Forever Sweet, Grungerman, Sweet Reinhard, Pentax, et al) operating out of the Delirium shop, Cologne's franchise of the Frankfurt-based store and label. In 1998, three years after opening the first Kompakt shop, the label issued its first release, Jürgen Paape's “Triumph.” The official history declares March 1, 1993, the date of Delirium's local launch, as the organization's birthday. It seems not entirely a revisionist move: The Kompakt philosophy long predated its first recorded product.

Even though the label's co-founders—Wolfgang Voigt, Jürgen Paape and Michael Mayer—are not entirely happy with the idea of “the sound of Cologne,” they bear some responsibility for it. Techno has always subdivided into local signatures, and Cologne has been known since the early-'90s as the global seat of minimal techno, largely on the strength of the Delirium/Kompakt crew's productions. When people speak of the Cologne sound they're often referencing a kind of dubby, oom-pah pattern built on a rocksteady 4/4 beat and punctuated with flickering pads.

When Kompakt's first dozen releases established a playful design aesthetic based upon multicolored dots, it seemed to announce a new uniformity within a genre that already prided itself on consistency and a serial aesthetic. But Kompakt—whose 100 releases to date have ranged from Reinhard Voigt's acid wallops to Klimek's blissful meandering, from Closer Musik's claustrophonics to T.Raumschmiere's cock-rock grind—represents more than one sound. For that matter, it's much more than just a label.

Wolfgang Voigt repeatedly calls Kompakt a “family”; outsiders have occasionally deemed it a cult. It's tempting to call it a minor empire. The

organization employs 17 people, publishes a record every few weeks, runs the Total Konfusion weekly at Cologne's Studio 672, manages booking for all its affiliated artists and distributes around 70 labels. This makes it—after the demise of EFA—the strongest independent techno distributor in Germany, if not all of Europe.

Add to this the Kompakt shop and mail-order operation, which ranks alongside Hardwax as the best techno record store in the world. Occupying the massive ground floor of Kompakt's nerve center, the shop is a field of vinyl arranged by style, then label, and within each label by catalog number. That long-lost gem you've been searching for? If it's in print, it's here; Kompakt displays an unusual fidelity to legacy recordings, with a backstock of 10,000 records neatly boxed and shelved in the basement.

The Establishment

From a guided tour of Kompakt's complex—situated on a shaded, residential street across the street from the offices of *Intro* magazine and the new home of RRR's Traum and Trapez labels—you'd never guess that electronic music has fallen on hard times worldwide. Clearly, Kompakt has figured out a workable strategy, in large part because it is a company of and for DJs. And from the looks of their infrastructure, they're in it for the long haul. In the sub-basement, they're building out the label's studios; hard-ass drum and acid riffs pounding from behind a locked door suggest that Reinhard Voigt, Wolfgang's younger brother, is in session today. Taking the industrial elevator up three floors, the doors open into a spacious, sunny office with a full kitchen on one end and a dozen desks inside where the organization's core staff is at work. At the far end of the room sits Wolfgang Voigt, his desk positioned with a view over the entire operation.

Wolfgang Voigt, once known as Mike Ink—and the rhythmic experimenter behind Studio 1 and the uncompromisingly minimal Freiland series—is Kompakt's resident philosopher. Phrases like “techno's avant-garde”—pronounced with an endearing French touch—and dialectical theories of musical development trip off his tongue. I'm more than a little nervous at the prospect of meeting him. After one run-in with an egregiously self-promoting musician, Voigt asked not to be introduced to any more visitors to the shop. Perhaps it's an apocryphal story, but the German techno scene is rife with similar rumors about Voigt's reclusiveness. He has long shunned interviews,





“Kompakt is our life, it’s the family, it’s the basis for everything.” –Wolfgang Voigt

techno’s core formula. What’s important is what happens in between *boom-boom-boom-boom*.

“We still think techno is the newest, hippest and most important music,” avers Voigt. “It’s still for us the most exciting and most experimental avant-garde music and subculture.”

Kompakt’s position, according to Voigt, is a paradoxical one: It’s an established label working in a once-radical musical form that has itself become established. Yet Kompakt still remains faithful to a belief in the progressive social and artistic potential of the form—a belief that verges on the utopian. “Kompakt is our life,” he says. “It’s the family. It’s the basis for everything.”

“Techno is established,” he concedes. “And normally, to be part of an established music scene is the opposite of what you think techno originally wanted to be—to be only avant-garde, subcultural and against the generation before. But this system—after pop comes punk and after punk comes new wave—doesn’t exist any more. We’re absolutely clear that techno is not ‘fresh’ any more. The music that people will party to next Friday in the club is mainly the music as it existed 10 years ago. Somehow it’s the same thing, but somehow it’s still new.”

“There is no music after techno,” declares Voigt. It’s an assertion that might ruffle the feathers of grime supporters, say, but if you consider acid house as the last major subcultural shift in pop music—and set aside the question of hip-hop’s dominance in the pop spectrum—he’s right. No revolution has supplanted the quickened pulse of 1988’s Summer of Love, a pulse that still beats in every 4/4 kick.

“For us it’s still *boom boom boom*. It’s not boring. What happens around the *boom boom boom* is the most important thing. If I were to choose between pressing a massive record which could have existed four weeks ago, or a new version of *boom boom*, I would take the new one, because we’re always interested in new music and new ideas. But exciting new ideas are hiding in between micro-trends, in very small variations. We

and Kompakt’s publicists have warned me that Voigt’s own productions and history are strictly *verboten*.

But when I confess that his M:1:5 project, an experiment in algorithmic dub on Kompakt’s predecessor, Profan, served as my introduction to German techno, Voigt launches into a five-minute excursus on the mathematical theories underlying the project. (The title draws from the notation for architectural scale, which determined the means by which he processed his samples.) “But anyway, we’re already talking about my music,” he says, smiling.

Voigt has a confusing habit of saying “in between”—he peppers his speech with the prepositional phrase where it doesn’t really fit. It would be easy to chalk it up to an imprecise grasp of English, but it might not be a stretch to relate the tic to his musical philosophy. For Voigt, it’s what’s in between beats that’s worth listening to—which is to say, Kompakt’s development is predicated upon the seemingly infinite variability of

don’t like retro, but we like archaeology—to pick something out of music of the past and put it together with something new.”

The Kick You Need

Back in grunge’s heyday, Seattle’s Soundgarden recorded a song in homage to their erstwhile employer titled “Sub Pop Rock City.” Cologne is Kompakt Techno City, in part because Kompakt distributes every local dance music label of note. (Most of the city’s players, including Traum’s RRR and Sub Static’s Michaela Grobny, seem to have spent time working at Kompakt HQ.) It’s a small, friendly city—the San Francisco to Berlin’s New York—and in the space of a few hours you’ll likely cross paths with at least a few of the genre’s leading lights. It feels fortuitous, then, that I run into Mayer on my walk to Kompakt’s headquarters.

Mayer, the globe-trotting DJ, producer and A&R director of the label, represents Kompakt’s most public face. Affable, easy-going and eager to talk, he takes the pressure off Paape—who politely declines an interview, preferring to maintain the helm of the store—and Voigt.

Mayer and I retire to an outdoor café next to the city-owned Studio 672, where we down kölsch—Cologne’s excellent local brew, served ice-cold in small glasses—and Mayer expands upon Kompakt’s search for the new. This search has led the label down the switchbacks of its back catalogue, where one week might see the release of Ferenc’s bizarre acid trance and the next week, Justus Koehncke’s lyrical disco nouveau.

“It’s a hunger for excitement,” he says. “It’s the kick you need every week. You go to the record store and you’re looking for this kick, for something that takes you through the weekend. For us it’s crucial to generate these kicks, especially if you’re so heavily into music.”

Earlier, I had mentioned the eccentricity of many of Kompakt’s releases—like the stuttery electro of the Rex the Dog B-side, with which I recently cleared a dancefloor. “I know about the importance of these

exceptional records that are great, no doubt, but maybe difficult to place in a set,” says Mayer. “But I would always take the position in favor of [releasing] this difficult record, rather than against it. Even if it takes some time, sooner or later it will be clear what’s so good about it. We release lots of records just to be right, in a way.”

Even the most adamant Kompakt fans may raise their eyebrows at this—legions of die-hard supporters groaned upon hearing the recent *Pass Into Silence* LP, for instance—but Kompakt wouldn’t be what it is without making decisions which might seem counter-intuitive. The label has a curious relationship to the pop music zeitgeist. The Rex the Dog 12-inch, for instance—the work of a semi-famous London producer Mayer refuses to name, even after several kölsches—flirts with electro-pop without conceding Kompakt’s techno core. And on Superpitcher’s recent debut album, *Here Comes Love*, the artist—who this spring became Kompakt’s first bona fide superstar, thanks to his baby-faced good looks and a widespread press push—went so far as to drench his album in his own admittedly unschooled vocals, a decision that alienated many erstwhile fans. But Superpitcher, aka Aksel Schaufler, defends his decision as something he had to do at that point in his artistic development, and the label stands behind him.

Mayer maintains that it’s eccentricities like these, combined with the label’s core aesthetic, that will kill the idea of a Kompakt sound once and for all. “I remember when we were starting out and someone warned us, ‘Labels that go beyond 20 or 30 releases always get boring.’ I was like, ‘Hell no!’” On the occasion of their first hundred releases, it seems that Kompakt has had the last laugh.

“Kompakt is like a diary,” says Mayer. “It reflects what is happening. Sometimes it’s a step ahead, sometimes a step aside, but it always deals with the present moment.”

www.kompakt-net.de



5



6



7



8

1. Wolfgang Voigt, Michael Mayer and Reinhard Voigt;
2. Wolfgang Voigt;
3. Reinhard Voigt;
4. Michael Mayer;
5. Justus Koehncke;
6. Jorg Burger;
7. Tobias Thomas;
8. Aksel Schaufler a.k.a. Superpitcher

WE LOVE COLOGNE LABELS

Where techno is concerned, Cologne is hardly a one-horse town. Leaving aside the city's thriving, experimental non-techno labels like Sonig, Karaoke Kalk, and Tomlab, the city has enough fresh, talented labels to give even Kompakt a run for its money.

TRAUM/TRAPEZ/MBF

Former Kompakt employee RRR has released over 100 records (and counting) on this trio of labels specializing in minimal funk and high-octane chug.

www.traumschallplatten.de

AREAL

Pushing out gnarly, acidic tunes from the likes of Metope, Basteroid and Ada, the upstart Areal is fattening up microhouse—for the slaughter.

www.arenal-records.com

SUB STATIC/KARLOFF

Falko Brocksieper and M.I.A. helm these two labels dedicated to tumescent, sentimental techno drenched in analog chords.

www.sub-static.de

MAX.E

Named for Max Ernst, Thomas Brinkmann's outlet runs the gamut from desiccated click tracks to hell-bent industrial hate-fucks.

www.max-ernst.de

FIRM

Thomas Schaeben's FIRM Records runs from disco to electro punk; even Peaches isn't out of place here.

www.firmrecords.de

ITALIC

Antonelli Electr. and Borneo & Sporenburg parse 8-bit funk to create minimal dance-pop mayhem.

www.italic.de

WARE

Matthias Schaffhäuser's Ware never met a ballad it didn't love—hence remixes for Raz Ohara, Talk Talk covers and Coloma's New Romantic yearnings.

www.ware-net.de

POPULAR ORGANIZATION

Home to Jorg Burger (aka The Modernist), Popular Org keeps a low but dependable profile; check the Pop Up collab with Italic for spring-loaded surprise.

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www.fabriclondon.com



Dutch techno is better than you think. Need proof? Meet the geeky, jazzy, glitchy electro muffins behind the hash-hazed record shops and labels of the Netherlands.

Words: Dave Stenton
Photos: Menno Kok www.mennokock.nl



It's a late Friday afternoon in the quiet, unsuspecting English seaside village of Hemsby as 2,500 electro enthusiasts and hip-hop crews descend on an out-of-season holiday camp. This unremarkable resort, tucked away on England's east coast, is a three-hour drive from London, but, for this weekend alone, many have traveled twice that distance. They are all here for the same reason: Dedbeat 2004, the premier electro, IDM and underground hip-hop festival in the UK.

Fast forward to the early hours of Saturday morning: Detroit In Effect is just concluding its live set; with it ends a showcase by Rotterdam's Clone records that has also seen DJ performances from Clone boss Serge Verschuur, Alden Tyrell and Dexter. The dancefloor in the substantial main room is packed and no one is in a hurry to leave—having witnessed an awesome five hours of electro that has touched on just about every conceivable strand of the multi-faceted genre, many are wondering just how the remainder of the weekend can possibly live up to the standard set by the first night.

Amsterdam, one week later. It's Queen's Day, a national holiday that sees the city awash with orange, the Dutch national color. Masses of people are dancing and drinking alongside the canals, as well as throughout the city's large open squares; many residents

are hawking their unwanted goods from the sidewalks outside their homes—for one of the world's most liberal cities, it's oddly the only day of the year that they are allowed to do so.

On Spuistraat, one of Amsterdam's busiest streets, the Rush Hour collective is holding a good old-fashioned block party in front of their record store. Those dancing in the broad sunlight, and later on at an after-party in the Bitterzoet club, are treated to a fluid, faultless soundtrack that stretches from Seiji to Tony Allen, and the crowd is every bit as open-minded as the DJs.

You would struggle to find two more contrasting settings: a small corner of England with Clone acts kicking up dust versus one of Europe's most famously relaxed cities where Rush Hour's jazz-influenced roster coolly reigns. But despite vastly different music policies and origins, Amsterdam's Rush Hour and Rotterdam's Clone have two things in common: Both consist of a record store, record labels, a distribution arm and affiliated club nights; and, more importantly, if either puts on a party or releases a record, quality is guaranteed. Rush Hour and Clone are not just representing for the Netherlands, but electronic music worldwide.

FULL SPECTRUM SOUND

Two days have passed since Queen's Day but, sitting in his office across the road from the Rush Hour store, Christiaan MacDonald complains that he's still feeling the after-effects. He and fellow Rush Hour co-founder Antal Heitlager, each 28, have plenty to celebrate, hence the hangover. In a little under six years, the pair has turned Rush Hour from a tiny mail-order company, operating out of Antal's bedroom, into a brand that encompasses one of Europe's best record shops, a distribution company, two sought after record labels (Kindred Spirits and Rush Hour) and Paradisco3000, a monthly party that regularly fills Amsterdam's cavernous Paradiso venue. In addition, Rush Hour distributes some of Scandinavia and the Benelux's best IDM, jazz and electronic labels, including Ann Aimee, Delsin, Down Low and Flying High.

Modesty and a relaxed attitude that's almost stereotypically Dutch prevail. "Most things that have happened weren't really planned," admits MacDonald with a trademark sly grin. "The good thing about a company with different sides to it is that they all feed each other. For instance, the shop was a meeting place as well as an outlet for records. There were a number of people thinking they could make music and they would meet other [like-minded producers] and would be inspired by that.

"Rotterdam and Detroit have the same influences in their music... It's the same no-nonsense mentality."—Serge Verschuur



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1. Mikebar, Stevbe the Peveb a.k.a. Rednose Distrikt and Aardvark;
2. Clone owner Serge Verschuur;
3. Rush Hour and Kindred Spirits owners Christiaan Macdonald and Antal Heitlager;
4. Clone artist Phako; 5. Clone artist Alden Tyrell

[Similarly], Paradisco3000 has had likeminded DJs play who have since decided they wanted to make some music for us. With the distribution we have a certain feeling or sound, and other labels want to tap into that. It all feeds each other.”

Part of the reason Rush Hour has come so far so quickly is a willingness to adapt and evolve—to continually associate themselves with the music that excites them most. “[Over the years],” continues MacDonald, “we’ve changed; not because we want to follow the next trend, but because when we feel something new the company changes with that. It evolves naturally. The music is the main reason for us being here, so whenever we move on in music the company has to move with it. So now the spread of music is wider—it goes from jazz to hip-hop to house to techno. And the parties are the same, they cover the same spectrum.”

All the more remarkable is the fact that Rush Hour’s status has been achieved without any media support. The radio stations in Amsterdam do not support underground music and the local music press does a pretty good job of ignoring it, too. But you know what they say about adversity and its knack for bringing people together. “Amsterdam is a small city, maybe that’s important,” muses MacDonald. “It’s like a big village where everyone knows each other and this group that we represent is quite small, so there’s no need to compete.”

This shared purpose and spirit of cooperation is key. MacDonald explains that the Rush Hour artists are working together to put themselves and their city in the spotlight where they belong. “Amsterdam has always had a flavor of its own. I think it creates its own sound. Because the city is not as well known for its musical culture as, for example, Detroit or London, people haven’t always been aware [of what’s going on]. There’s a healthy group of people here working hard to get stuff out there that they believe in and I guess that transpires into the city as a whole; people are up for hearing this music.”

CLONES UNITE

Forty-five minutes south of Amsterdam, in Rotterdam, 33-year-old Serge Verschuur is explaining how he put the foundations for the Clone empire in place in 1995. First, producer I-f (famous for his 12” “Space Invaders Are Smoking Grass”), the boss of the soon-to-be Clone-distributed labels Viewlxx and Murdercapital, began championing oddball ‘80s-influenced electro (unwittingly helping kick off the electroclash phenomenon). At the same time, a number of Clone labels and artists, in particular producer Legowelt, were playing rare Italo-disco records and producing music largely inspired by this almost forgotten scene. Verschuur saw the need for a leftfield electro-focused distribution company, and Clone was born. They now produce in-house labels Murdercapital, Clone, dub, Viewlxx and Den Haag, and distribute imprints like 4lux, Bunker and WF.

The Clone principals have always been safe championing resolutely unfashionable Detroit-influenced electro and techno, and their artists excel at it. This relationship with Detroit is deep-rooted, and goes both ways, says Verschuur. “Detroit has been a big influence. Motown, Juan Atkins, Transmat, KMS, Carl Craig—those are names that mean something to me and many of the people I work with. Strangely enough, we feel somehow connected to Detroit because it has the same vibe as Rotterdam. Both are industrial cities. I can also draw parallels between [our] gabba



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and [Detroit’s] ghetto bass—both appeal to the working classes and are styles of music that allow you to forget the daily struggles and release stress in a positive way. So I think there is a socio-cultural reason why Rotterdam and Detroit have the same influences in their music and why people from both cities work very well together. It’s the same nonsense mentality.”

Verschuur has been involved with dance music since the late ‘80s. He lived near and grew up with a number of the big Dutch hard house and trance DJs that dominate the major clubs worldwide. But he’s not about to knock them or claim that their music detracts from Clone’s boundary pushing. “It’s a personal evolution that results in the things we do,” he says. “Clone exists to satisfy myself and my friends and to provide the music we want. Luckily enough, there are more people who like what we like, and that’s why we still exist.”

A deal was recently struck with Bleep.com (Warp’s download site) that will see greater availability of Clone artists and labels in the digital sphere. The next step is to secure a relationship with a US label that will mean greater availability of Clone’s music in North America. Underestimate Verschuur at your peril. “If others take care of things, I don’t need to; but somehow I always feel the need to do things my way, because others won’t.”

www.rushhour.nl, www.clone.nl

“...whenever we move on in music the company has to move with it.” —Christiaan MacDonald



**DUTCH DELICACIES:
SIX HOT ELECTRONIC ARTISTS
FROM THE NETHERLANDS**

ALDEN TYRELL

Number of years producing: 10
 Next release: "Knockers" on Clone, and a release on Viewless soon after.
 Music influences: My machines, Bobby O and Patrick Cowley.
 Non-music influences: Coffee, cigarettes and my girl's tummy.
 If I wasn't making music I would: Be a psychiatric patient.

COSMIC FORCE

Number of years producing: 8
 Next release: A three-track EP containing "Frustrated Funk," "Belton Corney," and "Island/Proskool Texture."
 Musical influences: Kraftwerk, de Fabriek and old skool hip-hop.
 Non-music influences: Just dancing and graffiti.
 If I wasn't making music I would: Not be myself.

DEXTER

Number of years producing: 16
 Next release: My first album and a single—both coming soon.
 Music influences: Hip-hop, old school funk and electro.
 Non-music influences: Rock, folk music and metal.
 If I wasn't making music I would: Be rich.

REDNOSE DISTRIKT

Number of years producing: 4
 Albums: Iller Dan Je Ouder on Kindred Spirits.
 Next release: "Dutch Flowers" EP and "Kilio Cha Haki" on Uptoyoutoo.
 Music influences: Eddie Palmieri, Mocky and Art Blakey.
 Non-music influences: Mama, John Cleese and *The Muppet Show*.
 If I wasn't making music I would: Be in jail.

MEIKBAR

Number of years producing: 5
 Next release: "Liston" on Rush Hour.
 Music influences: Marvin Gaye, Clockwork Orange and Jay Dee.
 Non-music influences: Bad food, no sleep and Kenny G.
 If I wasn't making music I would: Be making movies.

KID SUBLIME

Number of years producing: 5
 Albums: I'm working on a Kid Sublime solo album.
 Next release: The Fruitsugar EP and then "Basement Works Vol. 3" on Jahwell.
 Music influences: Pete Rock, Thelonus Monk and Native Tongues.
 Non-music influences: The cosmos, my wife and coffee.
 If I wasn't making music I would: Be a depressed painter.



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THE RE-EDUCATION OF TALIB KWELI

48

Hip-hop revolutionary Talib Kweli's poetic fire bridges the gap between ideology and reality.

Words: Sam Chennault Photos: Paul O'Valle

For the truly devoted hip-hop fan, hearing Talib Kweli on 1998's Reflection Eternal debut single "Fortified Live" was like flipping open a new chapter in the book of conscious hip-hop. Although he didn't register with mainstream audiences until last year's hit "Get By," most of us remember Kweli from the late '90s halcyon days of Rawkus Records.

As a member of Reflection Eternal and Black Star, Kweli largely defined a late-'90s underground hip-hop scene where heartfelt but vague political pronouncements mingled with calls for hip-hop purity and social consciousness via music. And while he railed against racism, political corruption and the clichés of the gangsta rap age, Kweli's quirky vocal cadence, emotional transparency and ability to reevaluate his own ideology set him apart from hip-hop's other prophets of rage—the Chuck Ds and KRS-Ones whose stoic, burning bush personas were often one-dimensional and didactic.

Kweli both embodied what it meant to be a "conscious MC" and transcended that label by revealing his vulnerabilities and staying focused on the structural tenets of the art form. This summer finds Talib Kweli releasing *Beautiful Struggle* on Geffen Records. The album features production by the likes of The Neptunes and Kanye West, and guest turns by everyone from Mary J. Blige to MF Doom. We checked in with Kweli by phone and got his thoughts on hip-hop and its future challenges.

Your rhymes have these scathing indictments of political and social hypocrisy, but you're also able to pull back and celebrate life's joys and achievements. The title of your new album, *Beautiful Struggle*, also hints at that. Do you think that it's important to show that balance?

Definitely. If you're not celebrating anything, whatever you're struggling for is worthless. If your life is a constant struggle, you'll never appreciate anything until you celebrate; and you can't always celebrate because you'll never appreciate it.

Long-time fans are really glad to see you back together with Reflection Eternal partner DJ Hi Tek on *Beautiful Struggle*. Is it true that there was never a fall-out between you two, and that it was just a matter of you wanting to mature separately as artists?

Yeah. With Hi Tek it was something that we had to do and it was something that Hi Tek realized before I did. It was something that he forced because it was hard for me to reach him. I wanted him on *Quality*, but it was hard for me to reach out to him because he was in a different place. When he was ready, he reached out to me and now he's produced a number of songs on this album.

How do you view hip-hop differently from how you did six years ago, when Black Star first dropped?

It's a lot less idealistic than when Black Star first came out. At that time, hip-hop was wide open. There was an opportunity for anyone whose parents had money or who knew some white boys who had money to put out a record. And there was an independent scene that celebrated independence over quality. A lot of people put out records and you were supposed to champion those records because they were underground. The idea that it had to be dope got lost. And I think the same thing happened with gangsta rap.

So the music became more about ideology than about quality?

Yeah, in both scenes. Around the time when (underground label) Fat Beats was bubbling, there was albums that I would've never bought because of the lack of quality, but you were supposed to like it and it became the sort of thing where you were selling out if you didn't like it.

Hip-hop seems more musically and lyrically balanced these days with artists like Jay Z,





“[Hip-hop]... feeds my family and gives me inspiration, but I acknowledge it for what it is: a tool that I can use to get to where I need to go.”

Kanye West and Nas bringing an independent feel to mainstream music. You and Mos Def were some of the first ones to bring that balance back into focus. Do you see yourself exerting that kind of influence?

When we first came out—I’m a dope MC and so is Mos—there were a lot of MCs out there doing what we were doing. And we found a way into a situation where we could be heard, [which] has more to do with energy and ambition than who is dope. We were put into a position where the timing was perfect. When we came out, people needed that record...But I like showing people the idea that anyone can do this. Yeah, keep it real and be pure, but focus your energy on being heard. Mos Def is the epitome of a working class MC, but I was more of a purist when I met Mos than he was. He told me, “You have children. I have children. Let’s make some money on this shit.” And that was his whole attitude from the get. He is such a natural that the music and the rhymes come easy for him and he doesn’t even think about it. The idea that we’re supposed to be making a living off this also came a lot more natural to him than it did to me.

So, you would consider yourself much less of a purist now than you were back then?

Hip hop...I love it; it’s beautiful, it feeds my family and gives me inspiration, but I acknowledge it for what it is: a tool that I can use to get to where I need to go.

Do you ever wish that sometimes you were just another MC, and that people didn’t ask you these sorts of big and broad questions?

No, I don’t. I’m happy with who I am. Sometimes you get these heavy-handed questions, but, like you said, I talk about these social issues but I’ve also found a way to celebrate life. That wasn’t something that was easy for me to do. I got pinned into a box very quickly with the music that I made and the stances that I took. It’s fine to talk about social stuff, but when that becomes the focus then the music loses.

So it’s kinda what we were talking about earlier, with the ideology obscuring the music?

People think that fans come to my shows and fuck with me because I’m a conscious MC. That has nothing to do with it. There are thousands of conscious MCs, and the reason that I’m selling out shows is because I’m dope. And if I lose focus on that, then I’ll stop being dope.

The Beautiful Struggle is out in September on Geffen.

www.okayplayer.com

WHAT MAKES TALIB KWELI A DOPE MC?

MC Zion of Zion I:

Talib is dope because he is able to meld social commentary with the streets. He sits somewhere in between and creates a unique bridge that pushes the envelope beyond senseless materialism.

Main Flow of Mood:

A dope MC possesses the skills of delivery, concepts, punchlines, stage presence and positive work ethics and Talib Kweli has all of these qualities.

KOLLECTIV SOUL

Six-headed German wundergroup Jazzanova returns with a new twist on the mix compilation and a plan to take over the world with their red-hot Sonar Kollektiv label.

Words: Peter Nicholson
Illustration: Nago for Nonconceptual

Success is a bitch. As soon as enough people start to dig what you're doing, a whole contingent is going to start hating, usually along the lines of "Everybody likes them now," or "Their old stuff was better," or "Yeah, their remixes are great, but where's the artist album?" Germany's Jazzanova got hit with all these barbs after the steady buzz surrounding their remix work resulted in critical acclaim for *Remixes: 1997-2003* (Compost). But this six-member team of producers, DJs and engineers persevered and delivered 2002's *In Between* (JCR), which not only won over a new crop of critics but managed to match the commercial accomplishments of their compendium. And success ain't all bad—it has helped shed light on the crew's Sonar Kollektiv label, which is dedicated to breaking the next generation of future jazz and soul artists.

Jazzanova's eclectic mien is aptly captured on the recently released *...Mixing*, a compilation for Sonar Kollektiv that is at once representative of the collective's DJ sets, productions and their label. *...Mixing* starts out with hip-hop from Philly's Jill Scott before moving on to classic funk from Carol Williams, poetry-scented house courtesy of Berlin pal Dixon's unreleased remix of Attica Blues, the delicious future soul of Deyampert and the electro of Slope—it's far from your basic one groove/one tempo DJ set.

"What brings everything together," says Jazzanova's Jürgen von Knoblauch over the phone from Berlin, "is the soul feeling, [whether] it's a jazz record like the *Forum West* [compilation] or the Double U album. It doesn't matter if it's a reggae record or a drum & bass thing. In terms of the genre, it's very different, but in terms of the feeling it's the same."

Jazzanova's hydra-like nature makes it hard to pin them down to a sound, and they seem to like it that way. "There are many people who work by themselves, but for us [working together] definitely is an advantage," says Knoblauch. "In the beginning, we were searching for possibilities to bring more life to programmed tracks and that's how we developed our way of working. Yet still people say, 'Ah, they just press the Jazzanova button,' which is quite funny to hear." The group works on remixes and songs in duos, pairing engineers Axel Reinemer, Stefan Leisering and Rowsko Kretschmann with DJs von Knoblauch, Alex Barck and Claas Brieler. It's a bit remarkable that their results ever have kindred spirits, but this fluid symbiosis of ideas and technique is central to Jazzanova. As von Knoblauch colorfully explains, "Of course, Stefan sitting at a computer, he's a genius! But what's the best car without any fuel? Or any interior?"

One of the new tracks included on *...Mixing* alludes to the next logical development of the collective—going live. "Let Your Heart Be Free," originally by Patrice Rushen, features a sparse, angular funk reminiscent of Metro Area mated to the luxurious vocals of Nicola Kramer, Clara Hill and Georg Levin, resulting in a song of inescapable warmth and unavoidable motion. Jazzanova's ability to pair live vocals and instrumentation with electronic soul is further evidenced on "Boom Clicky Boom Clack," a recent exclusive, featuring Shawn Escoffery, for an upcoming Gilles Peterson album. These tracks' seamless blend of the organic and the electronic, the live and the sample, has taken time to refine, says von Knoblauch. "[Now] we can really see that we could work with musicians," he explains. "Perhaps that was a problem with our first album because we didn't have the experience—we had some problems handling artists. But this time it was like, 'Wow! [We've made] a big step already.'"

Von Knoblauch doesn't see playing live as the *ne plus ultra* of being musicians—the members of Jazzanova are DJs and producers first and foremost, and their instruments are turntables and computers. But the possibilities afforded by live performance and the interplay of instrumentalists are certainly alluring. "We are still thinking of doing something live," he says. "It won't be like a band that plays our tracks. But we have an idea regarding a Sonar Kollektiv Orchestra and this will belong to more artists."

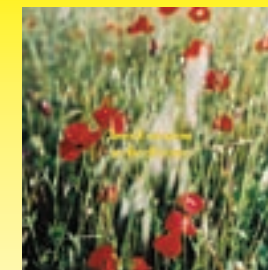
With six members, it's doubtful that Jazzanova has any shortage of ideas for future projects, nor are they short in the A&R department. In many respects, their structure and methods of production are just as radical as any of their music. But even though Jazzanova refuses to follow a traditional path, they share some eternal musicians' problems. When I quiz von Knoblauch about Berlin's reputation as a mecca for electronic musicians, he seems a tad nonplussed; he says that, in comparison to places like London, it's still relatively quiet and uncrowded. "There's still a lot of space, but still it's difficult to find a good soloist! So please come over to Berlin and make it easier for us to choose good instrumentalists!"

Jazzanova *...Mixing* is out now on Sonar Kollektiv. www.sonarkollektiv.com

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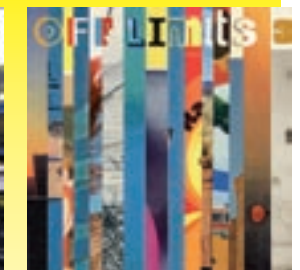
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A collection of dub and reggae from Paul St. Hilaire, Fat Freddy's Drop and others released on SK imprint Best Seven.



Forum West: Wewerka Archive 1962-1968
West German jazz from the '60s featuring ensembles fronted by Joe Haider, Hans Koller and Wolfgang Daunier.



Deyampert
Shapes & Colors
Lush, acoustic soul with sweeping strings wrapped around solid songs.



Off Limits 3 Mixed by Dixon
A superb sample of Dixon's taste, ranging from Black Strobe to Tejada & Duvante to Ayro.

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

London's Neotropic delves into Minneapolis basements and her rock roots to reinvent her psychedelic electronic music.

Words: Melissa Wheeler Photos: Meloni Poole



Sitting in a stylish café on the edge of Montreal's Jean Talon market, Riz Maslen—who records in solo and group settings as Neotropic—talks with eagerness about her upcoming North American tour in support of her new album, *White Rabbits*, on Mush Records.

With its psychedelic folk rock center and purposeful effects-laden layers of strings, guitars, drums and piano, it seems to share few similarities with the electronic music she built her name on. But the lessons she learned as part of London's arty early-'90s post-rave experimental chill-out scene remain.

Growing up in a 200-person town, she played in bands before moving to London in the 1980s. There she developed her fascination with technology under the tutelage of her friends in psych-ambient electronic act Future Sound of London. In 1995 she released her first EP on Ninja Tune subsidiary Ntone, but when the label folded two years ago Maslen's contract went down with it.

Although she questioned continuing her musical career, her passion for creation won out, and she continued to pursue film projects (she's presently working on the soundtrack for Meloni Poole's short film, *Lap*) and worked with a live band called The Twenty Jackies. Most recently she's been teaching music to under-privileged teenagers as part of Asian Dub Foundation's ADFED youth training project. While *White Rabbits* represents a leap in sound for Maslen, it also represents a return to her core, and a renewed sense of self.

There's much more live instrumentation and a more rock feel to *White Rabbits* than any of your other Neotropic work. Why this direction now?

I think the whole electronic scene has become quite stale. There's a lot of things that have become quite repetitive, and there's a lot of the scene that just seems to be sounding the same to me. I think a lot of the people who I've grown up with in the scene originally came from backgrounds that are much more about playing instruments. I know I have. But the thing about this record that's the same [as my other albums] is there's still a lot of twists and you have to listen to it more than once because there's so many subtle layers. I am an absolute demon when it comes to headphones and I love panning stuff. I like this feeling of space—I really like my music to have this spacious feeling, like you can almost move in it. Even though there's a lot going on, it doesn't feel cluttered.

What was the process of putting *White Rabbits* together?

I wrote pretty much all of it in the way I would normally approach a record on a computer, and then I took those elements and I went to Minneapolis. I'd met Andrew Broder from Fog, and he introduced me to a whole bunch of musicians that I was just so desperate to work with because they're so amazing. It's a really cheap place to record, so I went there for three weeks and spent most of that time recording with musicians in their basements and it was fantastic. I mean, everybody pretty much gave their time for free and I couldn't thank them enough for it; [to thank them I] took them out for dinner. I didn't have a record deal at this point.

What exactly happened with Ntone and Ninja Tune?

Financially it couldn't sustain itself anymore, and I was actually the only artist on it that was making any money. But they could never really place me, so the guy who ran Ninja got me in the office and said, 'If you start making music more like this, then I'll put you on Ninja' and I said, 'Well I'm not going to do that. I'm not having you tell me what kind of music I can make.' He said, 'Well then we can no longer have this relationship.' And that was fine, but it was just done via an email, which is the worst thing that can happen to somebody. And then he got me in, afterwards. I'm not angry at them for that. I don't disrespect them in any way whatsoever. I think I had a really good apprenticeship with them and I learned so much and I had so many good opportunities given to me that it only means good things. The problem with me is that I'm quite outspoken, and I think they found



“I really like my music to have this spacious feeling, like you can almost move in it.”

that difficult at times. And that’s fine. I’ve come to the realization now that I’m never really going to fit into any category; I’m always going to be a bit like a square peg in a round hole. And I’ve accepted that, and I’m happy with that. I think I just need to be with people who can at least understand the way to promote it. And I want to do lots more live shows and to do that I think you need a label behind you.

Do you feel *Mush* is where you’re at with your music?

The first time I met Robert the first thing he said to me is ‘the great thing is, you play live!’ and he said other things I had wanted to hear for a long time. I think *Mush* is a good place for me right now, and it’ll be interesting to see how things pan out over the next year. I’ve got a lot of shows in North America coming up, and this is the exciting bit for me—I’ve been looking forward to [it] for the last two years!

It sounds to me like you approach things with an open mind, but you know what you’re looking for in the finished product.

Once I’ve got the actual bare bones of what I’m working with then I really put in the effort. In the beginning it’s like, ‘Well, let’s see where we go’ and it’s like this with a band. It’s like when we go into rehearsal, I don’t stand there and go, ‘You play this, you play that.’ I say, ‘Okay, we know the track, let’s interpret it in the way you would as individuals,’ and that’s how I approach every show. Every show is different, even though we’re playing the same tracks.

That fluid approach seems to be your general approach to life. Not a lot of people think like that. Most people hang a lot of hopes on one goal. Do you agree?

I used to be like that, and I just found that it doesn’t do you any favors, having too high expectations. One of the biggest lessons I’ve ever learned is live in the moment. I’ve learned to not put too much at stake or take things personally. And I do have a tendency to personalize things, but that’s because I’m an artist and that’s what you do. But over the last few years I’ve realized that if things are meant to be then they will [happen] and you can only do the best you can; if you feel that you’ve done the best you can, that’s all you can do. That’s how I approach things—there’s room for us all. There’s room for everybody in this world, whatever you do.

White Rabbits is out this fall on *Mush Recordings*. www.dirtyloop.com



WHITE RABBIT INFLUENCES

Dick Dale: “He did all the early surf [music] stuff in the ‘60s, like the opening tune of *Pulp Fiction*. It’s inspiring to see someone who is not a young person—he’s in his 60s—with that energy who has been doing it for 20, 30 years.”

Low: “I saw Low last year at the Unions Chapel in London [and] their music translated because of what it is—very simple drums, guitar, bass. It’s one of the few gigs I’ve ever been to that I’ve ever cried.”

Dad’s Record Collection: “My father listened to a lot of rock music growing up and going back and rediscovering it has been really interesting. Listening to how it was made, the sound it has, understanding the production and how different it is for today has been really great.”

Community in Minneapolis: “There’s not really a pool of musicians in London that hang out and play in each other’s bands. And when you don’t have that, being thrown into that arena is really refreshing.”

MAKING TRAX

House music owes Trax Records, jack. Here's how the Chicago label built America's new urban soul.

Words: Peter Nicholson
Photos: Rachael Cain, Courtesy of Trax Records



“You know Trax was my label, right?” Oh shit. I’m not even five minutes into my first interview for this piece and Jesse Saunders (who bills himself as “The Originator of House”) is muddying the waters. But, just as the history of house music can’t be told with one story, neither can the history of the label that arguably started it all.

“No Way Back,” “Bring Down The Walls” and “Washing Machine.” Mr. Lee, Farley Jackmaster Funk and Phuture. All of them were on Trax Records, famous for breaking the raw sound of Chicago house around the world, infamous for dubious business dealings and its records’ incredibly crappy sound quality. The red-on-white labels of Trax 12” singles were at the center of sets by legends like Ron Hardy and Frankie Knuckles, and went from being sold out of the trunk of a car to selling out in London record stores.

Trax was born in the early ‘80s, when disco had been driven back underground after a period of commercial success. Disco was once a raw and vibrant genre that promised good times for everyone, regardless of race or sexual orientation, but the flood of major label releases saw everyone tagging along—you could even buy a Dolly Parton disco record. The backlash, much of which could be attributed to blatant prejudice against minorities

“None of us was making a career move; we didn’t know what we were doing.”—Farley “Jackmaster Funk” Keith

and gays, culminated in 1979 when Chicago rock radio station WLUP organized a “disco demolition” at Soldier Field, destroying records in a violent echo of the book burnings of less enlightened times.

But the backlash failed to stop the Windy City’s DJs who were mixing Italian disco with new wave. Add to that a tradition of illegal, underage warehouse parties, and Trax Records had a volatile cocktail for blowing house up.



Twenty years after its start, the label that is both revered and reviled is at it again, taking us back to where it all started.

Jacking The Fantasy

“They made the first house record—no doubt about it,” says Rachael Cain about Vince Lawrence and Jesse Saunders. Screamin’ Rachael is talking about Z-Factor’s “Fantasy,” a track she sang on. She obviously has some vested interest in primacy—she’s still recording and is now president of a reborn Trax Records that is releasing a three-CD retrospective, *20th Anniversary Collection*—Cain knows that “Fantasy” is one of a handful of tracks that can honestly vie for the title of first house record. It’s a long and contentious list that also includes Jamie Principle’s “Your Love,” late-era disco songs like “Let No Man Put Asunder” and another Saunders tune, “On and On.”

But whatever the point of origin was, there is no doubt that when Saunders and Lawrence teamed up with Larry Sherman, a businessman who owned the only local record pressing plant, to put out Le Noiz’s “Wanna Dance,” things jumped to a new level. Despite poor quality vinyl that was often recycled and songs that were initially little more than extended drum tracks, Trax saw instant success thanks to heavy rotation from the legendary Hot Mix Five radio team (Farley “Jackmaster Funk” Keith, Mickey “Mixin” Oliver, Scott “Smokin” Silz, Ralphie Rosario and Kenny “Jammin” Jason) and DJ play at clubs like The Playground, The Power Plant and The Music Box.

These clubs were home to “jacking,” a solo style of dancing that epitomized the fierce abandon of an era when gays and blacks were claiming their rightful place in society—even if it meant creating a society of their own. Many of the parties were all-ages or illegal one-offs; some were predominately gay and most crowds were entirely black, others mixed all of Chicago’s scenes and cliques. Farley “Jackmaster Funk” Keith says that with jacking, all rules were off. “You don’t need a [partner] to dance with,” he explains. “You can just dance by yourself in the room, you can dance on top of a speaker, *with* a speaker, whatever! You’re just lost.”

Cain remembers that Hardy’s groundbreaking DJ style at The Music Box had a huge effect



3

on the growth of house. Hardy, who died in 1991, was renowned for his 72-hour sets, backwards mixes and use of spliced, reel-to-reel tapes, as well as his prodigious heroin habit. “What hit me even more than seeing Frankie [Knuckles] at the Warehouse was going to see Ron Hardy,” Cain says. “The things that he did with music, no one else did. And the risks he took! If he loved a record, he would just break that record so hard. If he did that with your record...the whole town would be buzzing.”

Marshall Jefferson has said that “Saunders’ records were bigger than Prince” in Chicago at that time, despite what Jefferson thought was incredibly amateur production. Clearly, house had moved beyond the stage of DJs trying to one-up each other with drum tracks laid to tape. Sherman, with his control of the pressing plant, was quick to realize the opportunities.

The Reality

Farley Keith thinks that Sherman just had the right business at the right time. “None of us was making a career move; we didn’t know what we were doing,” says Keith, now a born-again Christian who continues to DJ. “So we’re making tracks and [Sherman] is offering us money for tracks and we’re like, ‘Well, hey! You’re gonna give me three grand for this track, five grand for this track, so sure!’ Larry had the vision of knowing that these records were going to be worth more than \$5,000 dollars. For instance, in Chicago alone he sold over 50,000 copies of “Funking With the Drums Again” [one of Keith’s records] in the first six or seven months. That’s \$400,000!”

These numbers are certainly open to dispute, but Jesse Saunders (currently in the middle of a “20th Anniversary of House” DJ tour, where he bills himself as “The Originator of House”) adds that Sherman was not exactly up front about other aspects of his business dealings. “Every record [Sherman] pressed for you, he pressed two for himself. Then he’d go behind your back and sell them. We were selling ‘em for three or four dollars—he’d sell them for two, or even one dollar.”

But Sherman didn’t have a monopoly on shady practices. Many of the artists themselves were plagiarizing each other or stealing songs outright. Maurice Joshua was only 17 when he made “This Is Acid,” which, alongside Trax releases like Sleazy D’s “I’ve Lost Control” and Phuture’s “Acid Tracks,” introduced the world to acid house. Joshua has enjoyed con-

tinued success, including earning four Grammy nominations and running influential labels like Vibe/Music Plant, but the early days were a bit rougher. He recalls the drama surrounding “I Gotta Big Dick,” his first recording for Trax.

“We found out that Larry Sherman was about to bootleg [“I Gotta Big Dick”]. So we found the guy that’s supposed to be doing it and we brought him down to a club in the suburbs and we were gonna like, really kick his ass,” recalls Joshua with a chuckle. “That person was Liddell Townsell [a producer who, along with engineer Richard Fairbanks and DJ Wayne Williams, was a key figure behind the scenes]. Even before that, Farley Jackmaster Funk was telling everybody *he* did the record. But Liddell was like ‘Yeah, I’m gonna go in tomorrow and do it, but why don’t you all come down and meet Larry and we’ll get it straightened out.’ So that’s how I got started.”

The Legacy

While Sherman is usually assigned the role of villain in the story of house, Rachael Cain takes a more sanguine view of the man with whom she now runs Trax. “Without him, people in New York were turning us down, saying ‘Come back when you have records,’” she asserts. “I have to say, ‘What if he had not put these records out?’ ...And Larry, he didn’t really have a clue what he was doing either!”

For a moment, ignore the off-the-record stories about guns or mafia connections. Forget about artists who allegedly didn’t write their songs, or sold the same song to two labels, or inspired others through their own sheer ineptitude. Listen to Maurice Joshua and Paul Johnson’s mixes for *The 20th Anniversary Collection*, and be astounded by the depth of the Trax catalog. The hypnotic, murky insistence of Adonis’ “No Way Back,” the aching, yearning soul of

Robert Owens on Mr. Fingers’ “Can You Feel It?,” Marshall Jefferson’s jerky, uplifting pianos on “Move Your Body,” the outer-space burble of the Roland TB-303 on Phuture’s “Acid Tracks”: The sounds that shaped house have been on Trax Records. We may never know if the right person got paid, but all of electronic music is indebted to those scratchy, hiss-ridden records with the red and white labels.

Part one of *The 20th Anniversary Collection* is out now on Trax Records. Part two chronicling the acid house era will be out this summer. www.traxhouse.com

“If he loved a record, he would just break that record so hard.” —Rachael Cain



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1. Marshall Jefferson at Last Dance Studio, 1988;
2. Afrika Bambaata;
3. Liddell Townsell & the Boys of Nu Nu fame;
4. Reggie Mars, Richard Fairbanks, Screamin’ Rachael Cain and Jesse Saunders at Universal Studio in Legendary Studio A, 1984 (Foote Kirkpatrick);
5. Hula, Crazy Fingers and Maurice Joshua, 1987

BACKING TRAX: ARTISTS SPEAK OUT ABOUT THE LABEL

Danny Krivit, New York: “Trax Records was my introduction to Chicago house music. There were other labels, but Trax had a consistency and a real rawness.”

Mark Farina, San Francisco: “Any record that is pressed so bad, yet still somehow becomes a classic, you know it has to be good. One of the top early Chicago labels that bridged me from industrial music into house.”

Luke Vibert, London: “[Musically speaking, Trax is] possibly the most influential of all dance labels. Just that red center label used to send shivers down my spine, let alone the music on the scratchy doggily-pressed vinyl, which I thought of as hard, uncompromising, unflinching, underground dance. N Jones (Phuture, DJ Pierre) was and still is a king amongst men!”



4

RUNNING & GUNNING

Jamaica's notorious DJ, **Ninja Man**, known as the original Don Gorgon, talks to XLR8R about Christianity, the Vybz Kartel controversy and the death of dancehall.

Words: Ross Hogg
Photos: Peter Dean Rickards www.afflictedyard.com

By way of introduction, Desmond Ballentine—better known as Ninja Man—offers this: “I was created to do the work of a Don Gorgon. The way that I live...is only a Don Gorgon live that way—above all don.”

Few would argue with his assertion. Ninja Man is unquestionably one of the most influential DJs to ever bless the mic in a dancehall session, a man whose sway extends beyond Jamaica's borders to American MCs like Method Man and Lyrics Born. The badman from St. Mary Parish in Jamaica is best known as an MC who talks literally and figuratively about the use, caliber, model of guns—in dancehall parlance he's a “gunman DJ”—but he takes exception to this title.

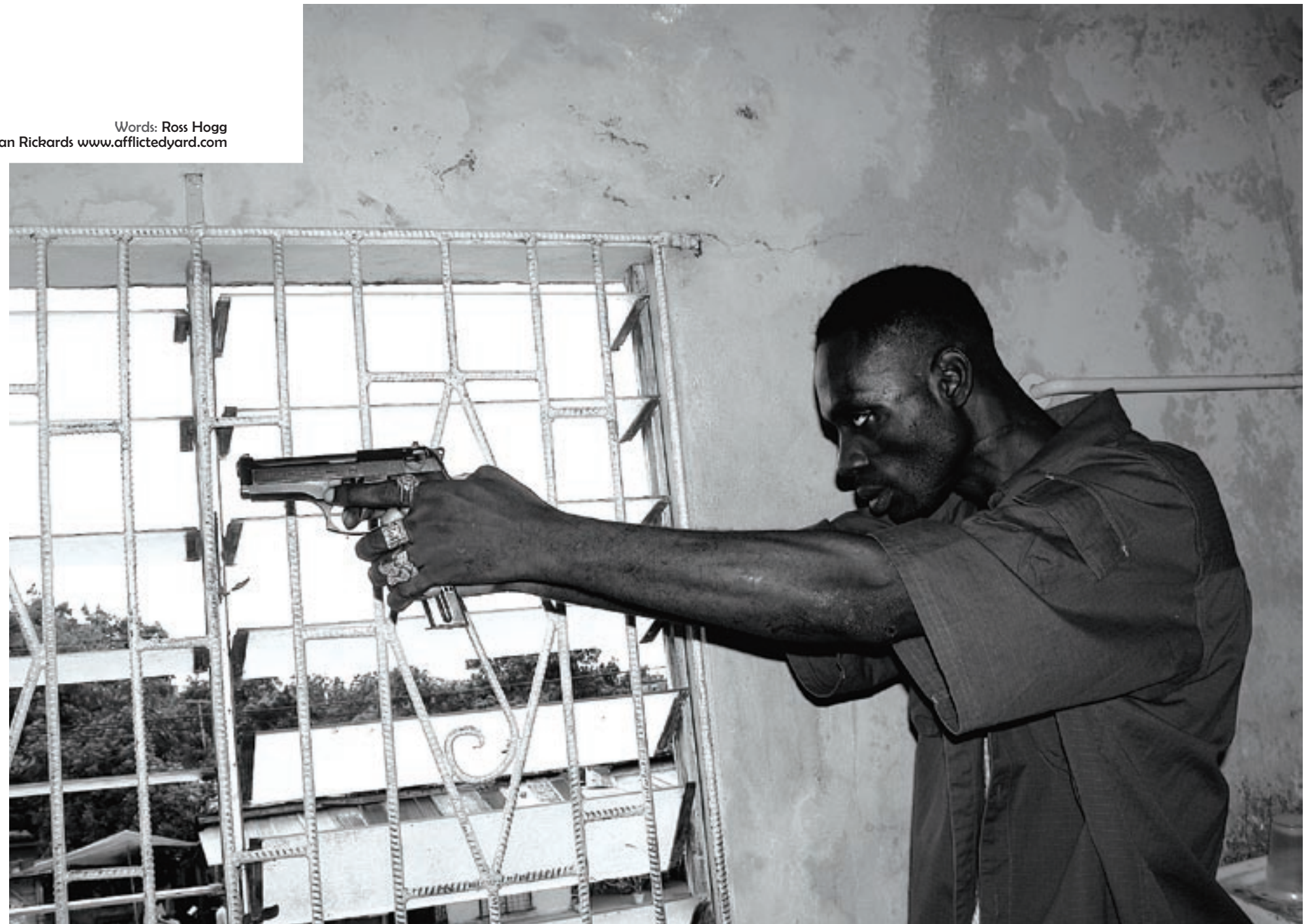
“Why people portray my style of DJ as gunman lyrics is because me talk ‘bout the ting dem wha’ happen in front of my eyes,” he says. “Is not a cartoon story—is a life story. So dem classify me as a gunman and a gunman DJ.” With classic tunes like “My Weapon” and “Murder Dem,” which cover both lyrical and literal killings, it's easy to see why the appellation has stuck.

Ninja Man cut his lyrical teeth with the legendary Killamanjaro Sound System and made his recording debut shortly thereafter in 1986 with “Protection” alongside Courtney Melody—the first-ever release on the Killamanjaro label. Though other DJs (Ninja Ford, Ninja Kid) would try to ride his coattails and imitate his delivery, there can only be one “Phenomenon One” (the phrase Ninja Man utters before launching into his lyrical barrages). And in the early '90s, he was just that: a phenomenon. Picking up where Yellowman left off, he quite literally ruled the dance alongside his sparring partner Shabba Ranks, with whom he had several fierce onstage battles.

He's recorded caustic reality tunes (“More Reality” and “Legalize the Herb”) as well as classic collaborations with sweet-voiced singers like Gregory Isaacs (“Set Me Free” and “Cowboy Town”) and Tinga Stewart, with whom he recorded a version of Percy Sledge's lush 1967 hit “Cover Me,” one of Ninja's biggest records ever. “When you know the tenderness in me, the world surprise,” he states softly. Lest a soundboy get any bright ideas, he's quick to add, “But that only the girls will find out.”

Even without having a bona fide hit in years, Ninja maintains a very high profile. In 1997, he made news by converting to Christianity, even performing for a while under the moniker Brother Desmond. But don't write him off as a choirboy. “[A] Christian is a different person from me. Me have a work fi do and until it done, I can't left it. But anytime God ready again, him *will* call me.” Then, sounding exactly like a charismatic preacher, he adds, “So when I come back, if dem waan' call I 'Bredda Desmond,' if dem waan' call I 'Nazarene,' you waan' call I 'rabbi,' all I haffi tell dem is, 'I'm comin' back in the name of Jesus!’”

At times, it seems Ninja Man is less intent on bringing Jesus to people than with sending people to God. Over the years, he has been charged with murder, assault and possession of a deadly weapon and has been in and out of Jamaica's jails. In light of this infamous track record, it was all the more shocking when, in December, 2002, he handed over his gun to police Superintendent Reneto Adams at Sting, one of Jamaica's most notorious



“Me have a reputation as a real badman... badman can change.”



“When you know the tenderness in me, the world surprise.”

screen, and it has. He’s starred in *Rude Boy*, *Third World Cop* and, most recently, *Is It Worth It?* When asked if his roles resemble him, he replies, “Me is not a man who pick and choose character. But every time I come on the screen, people are supposed to say, ‘I get a performance.’ In every movie, I’m the leading actor, even though I don’t get a lead role yet.”

While Ninja is still keen to record—and hasn’t lost a single lyrical step—he says that dancehall has taken a turn for the worse. “Nowadays, you go to a dance and say, ‘Gimme a dance, me girlfriend.’ By the time you say, ‘Make me whine one time,’ you just hear ‘Wheel! Wheel!’ [referring to when the DJs stops and rewinds the record] So me nuh see no dancehall again.” This criticism extends to DJ and singers, too: “There’s no love in the music anymore. When it was me, Shabba Rankin, Flourgon, Admiral Bailey, Josey Wales, Charlie Chaplin, we used to live inna one love, one unity. Nowadays, every artist fight against artist. The music deteriorate a lot because there’s no love and no unity.”

Ninja should know. Last December, again at Sting, he found himself being taunted by dancehall’s newest superstar, Vybz Kartel, who crossed the line between lyrical clashing and physical violence. Ninja, who is used to handing out lyrical beatdowns, found himself outnumbered four-to-one and on the receiving end of a physical beating. Even though Kartel made a public apology days later, Ninja claims that Kartel and his crew are only alive because Ninja’s fans did not want to see him back in prison. With all the fervor of a gospel singer, he bawls out: “*I know I coulda mash dem out/Use my*

45 and shot dem out/When Kartel come diss the other day/I coulda rise my gun/and shot di nigga straight ‘pon di ground/But this is what me fans dem say/“Ninjaman nuh rise the AK.”

Photos of Ninja Man taken in an unoccupied room, top floor of the Exodus Studio Building, Red Hills Road in Kingston. At the time, he was wanted by police for allegedly firing a weapon after a dispute over a person not agreeing to lend him a pair of scissors. www.afflictedyard.com

LICK SHOTS: NINJA MAN'S BEST SINGLES

1. Ninja Man “My Weapon” (Mr. Doo)
2. Ninja Man and Tinga Stewart “Cover Me” (Pick Out)
3. Ninja Man and Bounty Killer “Bad Man Nuh Cub Scout” (Jammy\$)
4. Ninja Man and Assassin “Real Bad Man” (Stone Love)
5. Ninja Man “More Reality” (Jammy\$)

annual stage shows. As if channeling his Brother Desmond alter ego, he explains: “Lookin’ at the rate of crime and violence, we need somebody to set an example, to show the world that Jamaica can change. Me have a reputation as a real badman, so that’s the first example that badman can change.”

For the genre’s ultimate gunman to willingly give up his piece to a cop led some to think he’d turned informer. He states emphatically, “Me a badman! Police can’t get my gun if them search my place. If a man feel like he can take my gun, tell him...” Ninja pauses here and then says, with a wicked smile almost visible through the phone line, “Try *anytime*.”

It seems only natural that his rude boy persona would translate well to the silver



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LABELS WE LOVE: THE 25 BEST INDEPENDENT LABELS

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We music nuts at XLR8R like challenges, especially when it involves the record labels and music releases we exuberantly dance around our office to during deadline. (Believe me, it can get crazy when a new Vybz Kartel, San Quinn or Clinic album hits our cubicles.) We had to get inside the minds of the geniuses that devote their lives and livers to releasing records that (sometimes) don't make any money.

And just what do all record labels have in common? Label owners are *obsessive* about music. And so are we. In fact, people always flag us down on the street, at clubs, at record stores, and ask, "What are your favorite record labels?" We'll spare you the suspense—just read this. *Tomas Palermo*



AESTHETICS

Artists: Seth P Brundel, The Eternals, Daniel Givens, Pulseprogramming.

Styles: Post-rock, electronic.

Obsessions: Art (presently doing pottery: Lucie Rie, Hans Coper and Lisa Larson are my current favorites), photography, design, architecture, animals, biodiesel.

Trivia: Our two missing catalog numbers are AST02 and AST04. 02 was to be a Flying Saucer Attack/Windy & Carl collaborative record and 04 was to be a Thurston Moore release of the audio he did for the Liv Tyler movie *Heavy*.

Mascot: No. But Sarah and I did an owl illustration that's on our current t-shirts and stickers.

Hot New Release: Seth P Brundel *Beyond Murky Drapes*.
www.aesthetics-usa.com



BABYGRANDE

Artists: Brand Nubian, Jean Grae, Jedi Mind Tricks and Supernatural.

Styles: Progressive hip-hop, rock.

Obsessions: Our previous boss, Bryan Turner, built Priority Records into one of the best indie labels of his generation. We're obsessed with doing the same thing with Babygrande. We'd also like to make a few blockbuster movies along the way.

Trivia: Babygrande is funded using money made selling scripts to Hollywood, including the script for *Soul Plane*.

Hot New Release: Albums from Brand Nubian, Jean Grae and Jedi Mind Tricks.

www.babygrande.com

BIG DADA

Artists: Infinite Livez, Roots Manuva, TTC, Ty.

Styles: Hip-hop, bouncement.

Obsessions: Going home.

Trivia: The late [Zairian dictator] Idi Amin called himself the Big Dada. We didn't know this when we named the label...

Mascot: Does a moldy cup of coffee count?

Hot New Release: Bigg Jus's *Black Mamba Serums* and Diplo's debut full-length, *Florida*.

www.bigdada.com

BINGO BEATS

Artists: D-Bridge, D Kay, DJ Zinc (a.k.a. Jammin).

Styles: UK garage, breakbeat, drum & bass, house.

Obsessions: Sleeping in the day.



Trivia: The label is managed by the same people who run Tempa Records, Soulja Records and the club night Forward>>.

Mascot: Harry, the office junior.

Hot New Release: Zinc featuring Slarta John, "Flim," with Calibre (d&b) and Horsepower (dubstep) remixes.

www.bingobeats.com

BLOOD & FIRE

Artists: Horace Andy, Big Youth, The Congos, King Tubby.

Styles: Roots reggae, dub.

Obsessions: We're too old for obsessions.

Trivia: We're 10 years old this year. The Blood and Fire Soundsystem with U-Brown, Ranking Joe, Steve Barrow and Dom played to 8,000 people June '03 in the grand place of Brussels, Belgium.



Hot New Release: Reissues of two dub albums produced by the late Dennis Brown.
www.bloodandfire.co.uk

DEFINITIVE JUX

Artists: Aesop Rock, El-P, Mr. Lif, RJD2.

Styles: Progressive hip-hop, instrumental beats.

Obsessions: The pursuit of money and power... and sneakers.

Trivia: The co-owner Amaechi is the son of African royalty.

Mascot: A dog skeleton with a turntable stylus head.

Hot New Release: Rob Sonic *Telicatessen* and The Perceptionists *Black Dialogue*.
www.definitivejux.net

DOMINO

Artists: Four Tet, Clinic, Manitoba, Juana Molina.

Styles: Rock, hip-hop, electronic.

Obsessions: The US office is collectively obsessed with food and dogs.

Trivia: You know when you hand one of us a Domino



sugar packet and point to the logo and say "Hey, hey—look at that?" We've heard that joke already.

Mascot: Rhoda, the dog who we share our office space with. She keeps us sane.

Hot New Release: The domestic issue of the City Centre Offices album by Ulrich Schnauss, *A Strangely Isolated Place*.
www.dominorecordco.com

FAT BEATS

Artists: Atmosphere, J-Zone, Soul Position, Starving Artists Crew.

Styles: Hip-hop.

Obsessions: We obsess over the realness.

Trivia: Label president owns the indie rock label Triple Crown Records, home to emo darlings Brand New.

Mascot: Dirty 4 Fingers.
Hot New Release: Debut LP from Detroit's own OneBelo (formerly of Binary Star), *The S.O.N.A.G.R.A.M.*, in stores this fall.
www.fatbeats.com



FEMALE FUN

Artists: Dooley O, Gametightelectro, Ge-ology, Chris Lowe, Raw Produce.

Styles: Hip-hop, instrumental beats.

Obsessions: Rap music, women, celebrating and eating out a lot.

Trivia: We were originally called Popsicle Records, but Count Bass D told us it might be illegal to keep the name, so we changed it to the closest representation of that concept.

Mascot: Women having fun.

Hot New Release: Chris Lowe *Black Life*, Dooley O *I Gotcha*.
www.femalefunmusic.com

FREERANGE

Artists: Jimpster, Trevor Loveys, Andreas Saag (Swell Session/Stateless), Shur-I-Kan.

Styles: Future jazz, broken beat, house.

Obsessions: [Label co-founder] Tom used to be a proper trainspotter until he was 10, and still has his notebooks with lists of the engine numbers. Jamie "Jimpster" Odell is obsessed with keeping his hard disk defragged and specialty meats.

Trivia: Our 50th release comes out January 2005.

Mascot: The penicillin we're currently culturing on the inside of our office fridge.

Hot New Release: Jimpster's *Selected Remixes 2000-2004*.
www.freerangerecords.co.uk

GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL

Artists: Dabrye, Matthew Dear, Dykehouse, L'usine.

Styles: Avant-pop, electronic, techno.

Obsessions: Classic Disney.

Trivia: We have a satellite.

Mascot: Boy, Cat and Bird.

Hot New Release: James Coton *The Dancing Box*.
www.ghostly.com

GREENSLEEVES

Artists: Elephant Man, Sizzla, Vybz Kartel, Ward 21.

Styles: Dancehall, reggae, ragga.

Obsessions: We are obsessed with the quality of mastering, production, credits and basically making sure every part of the record is done to an A-1 quality.

Trivia: Back in the day one of our female artists, JC Lodge, had a hit here in London entitled "Somebody Loves You Honey." JC's father heard that song, contacted us, and was reunited with his daughter, JC Lodge, who up until that point he had not seen for many years.

Hot New Release: *Ragga Ragga Ragga 2004*.
www.greensleeves.net

HOSPITAL

Artists: High Contrast, London Elektricity, Landslide, Nutone.

Styles: Breakbeat, drum & bass, future jazz.

Obsessions: Cashew nuts and prog rock.

Trivia: The label is re-locating to South London; the building we're moving into is a former old person's home.

Mascot: Bobo—a dark and scary orphan doll discovered on the London Elektricity German tour.

Hot New Release: High Contrast *High Society* in September.
www.hospitalrecords.com

INTERNATIONAL DEEJAY GIGOLOS

Artists: DJ Hell, Dopplereffekt, Mount Sims, Psychonauts.

Styles: Avant-pop, disco-punk, electro, techno.

Obsessions: Hell is a maniac obsessed with music.

Trivia: The first gigolo movie, *The Gigolo Freakshow*, is to be released soon on DVD.

Mascot: It's gone from Arnold Schwarzenegger to Sid Vicious to Amanda LePore.

Hot New Release: New albums soon from Mount Sims, David



Carretta, Dirty Criminals, Adriano Canzian and Crossover.

www.gigolo-records.de

KRANKY

Artists: Ioscil, Out Hud, Pan-American, Strategy.

Styles: Ambient, drone, post-rock.

Obsessions: Getting people to write about the musicians and not about two guys who work for the label.

Trivia: Mandals!

Hot New Release: Coming out this fall: Greg Davis *Somnia*, The Dead Texan *The Dead Texan*, Growing *The Soul of the Rainbow and the Harmony of Light*.

www.kranky.net

LEX

Artists: Boom Bip, Danger Mouse, Non-Prophets, Prince Po.

Styles: Experimental hip-hop, rock, lo-fi folk.

Trivia: Lex is named after Alex Dale—a hotshot lawyer and ex-flatmate of [label manager] Tom. [Label co-founder] Alex can do somersaults from a standing position and he's also an ex-bouncer.

Mascot: There's a really pretty girl called Kate who handles the guestlist at all the London shows. She's the closest thing Lex has to a mascot.

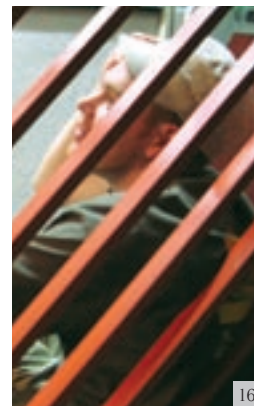
Hot New Release: Prince Po *The Sickness*.

www.lexrecords.com

M3RCK

Artists: Brothomstates, Kirstuit Salu, Lackluster, machinedrum.

Styles: Ambient, hip-hop, IDM.



Obsessions: Besides music, no.

Trivia: Machinedrum also records as Syndrone and T'stewart.

Mascot: Most people don't even know what the artists look like, much less our label mascot.

Hot New Release: Machinedrum *Bidnezz*.

www.m3rck.net

MORR MUSIC

Artists: Lali Puna, Isan, Opiate, Styrofoam.

Styles: Electronic, indie pop/rock, indie hip-hop.

Obsessions: Collecting records and comics, *Star Wars* and working all day.

Trivia: We're setting up a second more songwriter- and indie band-oriented label.

Hot New Release: The Go Find (a new project from the Styrofoam guitarist) and Styrofoam's fourth album featuring Alias, Bob Mould, Markus Acher, Ben Gibbard and Lali Puna.

www.morrmusic.com

OUTPUT

Artists: Black Strobe, Colder, Circlesquare, Dead Combo.

Styles: Rock, no wave, electro.

Obsessions: To keep up a consistent schedule of challenging yet accessible music while keeping our integrity and our feet planted firmly on the ground.

Trivia: Our website will finally be online again within the next few months!

Hot New Release: The new Dead Combo single "You Don't Look So Good" (featuring an amazing remix by Jackson) and the new Mu double A-sided single, "We Love Guys Named Luke"/"Paris Hiton."

www.outputrecordings.com

PLUG RESEARCH

Artists: Ammon Contact, Dntel, Languis, Milosh.

Styles: Electronic, avant-pop, experimental beats.

Obsessions: Japanese food, Belgian beer and early retirement.

Mascot: Frosty.

Hot New Release: Headset *Space Settings*.

www.plugresearch.com

QUANNUM PROJECTS

Artists: Blackalicious, DJ Shadow, Lateef, Lyrics Born, Lifesavas.

Styles: Hip-hop, funk.

Obsessions: Vinyl obsession is very common around here.

Trivia: We like big butts and we cannot lie.

Mascot: Only the 1573 portrait of robber baron Ludwig von Quannum we bought on eBay.

Hot New Release: Lyrics Born remix record, *Same Shit, Different Day*, featuring remixes from Prefuse 73, Morcheeba, KRS-One and others; Fela Kuti *The Underground Spiritual Game*—a mixtape of the Nigerian Afrobeat legend by Chief Xcel.

www.quannum.com

REPHLEX

Artists: The Bug, Cylob, Aleksí Perala (a.k.a. Ovuca.com and Astrobotnia), Bogdan Raczynski.

Styles: Braindance, grime, electronic.

Obsessions: Music—humanity's ultimate ambition.

Trivia: Rephlex was established in 1991. There are about one million Rephlex units on this planet.

Hot New Release: See the website for complete 2004 line-up.

www.rephlex.com

SOUL JAZZ

Artists: Ammon Contact, ESG, Osunlade, Studio One comps.

Styles: Reggae, Brazilian, funk, electronic.

Obsessions: You can never have enough records; don't you think?

Trivia: Soul Jazz founder Stuart once sailed a catamaran solo across the Atlantic Ocean.

Mascot: Baby Bridget, the youngest Soul Jazz employee (eight months).

Hot New Release: *Chicago Soul*, a collection of blues, funk and soul from the mighty Chess record label.

www.souljazzrecords.co.uk

STEREO DELUXE

Artists: Bigga Bush, Boozoo Bajou, Mo' Horizons, The Strike Boys.

Styles: Downtempo, electronic, jazzy beats, lounge.

Obsessions: Our founder Oli Roesch died in a motorbike accident in August 2002, but his obsession was definitely the music and this is what we're sharing with him.

Trivia: We're addicted to chocolate.

Mascot: The easy chair from the SD logo.

Hot New Release: Magic Number *That Day*.

www.stereodeluxe.com

WAVE MUSIC

Artists: Floppy Sounds, François K, Matthias "Matty" Heilbron, Barbara Mendes.

Styles: House, tech-house, dance classics, future jazz.

Obsessions: Timeless music and good karma.

Trivia: The label was created in reaction to the many A&R people who didn't know what to do with the music that François kept submitting to them. He figured he might as well do it on his own.

Hot New Release: A Deep Space NYC compilation including original songs recorded by François and legendary dub poets and a new album by Eric Kupper.

www.wavemusic.com

10 TO WATCH:

BIG APPLE

South London's toughest garage, dubstep and future beats. www.bigapplerecords.co.uk

EMOTICON

Tom Churchill's techno-jazz imprint. www.emoticon-headspace.net

GLOW IN THE DARK

Innovative true-school hip-hop. www.gitdrecords.com

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Meticulous soul and funk reissues. www.lightintheattic.net

LOGISTIC

Paris knows techno. www.logisticrecords.com

PLANT

New York hot licks—rock bands and house music mixed. www.plantmusic.com

RAW FUSION

Swedish future jazz, hip-hop and soul-reggae mash-ups. www.rawfusion.se

SHITKATAPULT

Bad boy T.Raumschmiere's punk rock techno imprint. www.shitkatapult.com

SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND

Folk meets electronic in a second-hand shop. www.smalltownsupersound.com

UNCLE JUNIOR

Real soul, classic hip-hop and underground NY jazz. www.sevenheads.com

1. DJ Zinc, Bingo Beats; 2. Allen Avanesian and Ryan Gamsby, Plug Research (Photo: Reijin Fukao); 3. Trevor Jackson, Output Recordings; 4. DJ Hell, International DJ Gigolos; 5. Thomas Morr, Morr Music; 6. Joel Leoschke and Bruce Adams, Kranky; 7. Chuck Wilson, Babygrande; 8. El-P, Definitive Jux; 9. Gift of Gab, Quannum (Photo: Winni Wintermeyer); 10. Jan Kruse, Morr Music; 11. François K, Wave Music; 12. Bernd Roesler, Michi Loehr, Elisabeth Rudner and Bjoern Fritsch, Stereo Deluxe; 13. Peter Agoston, Female Fun; 14. Laurence Bell, Domino (Photo: Eva Vermandel); 15. Tom Brown, Lex Records; 16. Gabe Koch, M3rck; 17. Chris Goss and Tony Colman, Hospital Records; 18. Dam Satgiu and Steve Barrows, Blood & Fire; 19. Ken Dyber, Aesthetics; 20. Stuart Baker, Soul Jazz; 21. Richard D. James and Grant Wilson-Claridge, Rephlex; 22. Ethen Holben, Fred Feldman and Joseph "DJ Jab" Abajian, Fat Beats; 23. Chris Cradnell, Greensleeves; 24. Sam Valenti, Ghostly (Photo: Will Calcutt)

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TOO.**

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FUEL SIGNATURE SERIES NO 7 OF 100:
YOGI PROCTOR / POPWAR

STYLE: BEAUTIFUL LOSERS

Tomorrow's urban legends team up for the world's best showcase of outsider art.

Words: Matthew Newton



With *Beautiful Losers: Contemporary Art and Street Culture*, curators Christian Strike and Aaron Rose have assembled a comprehensive exhibition that chronicles the past 30 years in skateboarding, hip-hop and punk rock aesthetics. Bringing together painters, filmmakers, photographers, graphic designers and graffiti artists from all over the country, the show features a bounty work from visual artists at the forefront of their craft.

"These artists have been working, for the most part, under the radar of both the mainstream art world as well as mainstream American culture," Strike says, "but that has begun to change in recent years."

Boasting work from Thomas Campbell, Barry McGee, Ryan McGinness, Harmony Korine, Terry Richardson, Geoff McFetridge, James Jarvis and countless others, *Beautiful Losers* is a neatly packaged document of urban life and street culture—from Stephen Powers' bold and iconic 3D storefront installation to Phil Frost's intricate, correction fluid-accented masterpieces.

"This group of artists is the most important group of artists working in America today. I feel [they] will be regarded on the same level as the Beat [poets] and the Pop artists," Strike explains. "The enormous amount of people interested in their work

is a testament to that, and I feel we've only scratched the surface."

Threading together various aspects of the culture, the exhibit also features albums, books, zines, skate videos and decks, toys and clothing—providing audiences with a bird's eye view of the evolution of an aesthetic. And there is even a section dedicated to those artists who influenced these "beautiful losers," featuring work from R. Crumb, Henry Chalfant, Glen E. Friedman, Jean-Michel Basquiat and several other art world luminaries.

Opening this past March at the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, *Beautiful Losers* relocated to the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco in July, and European and Japanese exhibition dates are scheduled for 2005.

www.iconoclastusa.com, www.yerbabuenaarts.org





Opening spread: Mark Gonzales/Ryan McGinness (left);
 Thomas Campbell (right)
Above: Clare Rojas
Right: Ed Templeton (top); Mike Mills (bottom)



Left (clockwise from top left): Barry McGee and Josh Lazcano truck; interior detail of the truck; Geoff McFetridge; skateboard ephemera
Above: Chris Johanson with Jo Jackson in background

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ALBUM REVIEWS

08.04

THROBBLING GRISTLE
THE TASTE OF TG: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE MUSIC OF THROBBLING GRISTLE
Mute/UK/CD

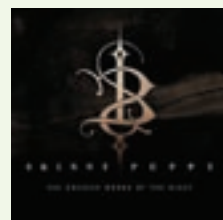
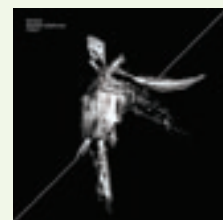
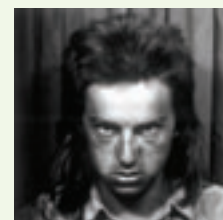
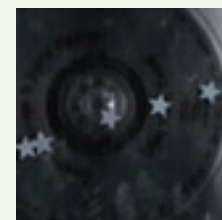
GENESIS P-ORRIDGE & ASTRID MONROE
WHEN I WAS YOUNG
Important/US/CD

RICHARD H. KIRK
EARLIER/LATER—UNRELEASED PROJECTS ANTHOLOGY 74/89
Mute/UK/2xCD

SANDOZ
DIGITAL LIFEFORMS REDUX
Mute/UK/2xCD

SKINNY PUPPY
THE GREATER WRONG OF THE RIGHT
Synthetic Symphony/GER/CD

ABSOLUT NULL PUNKT
LIVE IN JAPAN
Important/US/CD



If Kraftwerk gave us visions of gleaming glass-domed cities, then industrial music's first wave soundtracked the sky-blackening factories that mass-produced those utopian luxuries. During the late '70s, shock troops Throbbing Gristle and Cabaret Voltaire translated 40 years worth of academic experiments with musique concrete tape cut-ups and raw electricity into true social commentary. This was electronic music intended to reflect our diseased society, and revel in it.

Eventually, the industrial revolution became just another commodity for the teenage wasteland—Marilyn Manson scraping bubblegum off the sidewalk and offering it to children. However, industrial's spirit of DIY noise-making is still alive in other genres, such as power-electronics, darkcore, "laptop-noise," IDM and plunderphonics. These releases document the glorious pasts and lackluster presents of a few industrial legends.

Throbbing Gristle's *The Taste of TG* covers the art terrorist unit's more remarkable moments. Featured are the dying AM broadcast of a burn victim's account in "Hamburger Lady" and the band's sincere love letters to synth-pop (which would later lead members Genesis P-Orridge and Peter "Sleazy" Christopherson into acid techno as Psychic TV). These kicks-in-the-eye to bourgeois society are still oddly fresh and clever, particularly "Exotic Function,"

whose faithful homage to '50s lounge idol Martin Denny could have possibly entertained vacationing industrialists at Disney's Hawaiian Village.

On the other hand, P-Orridge loses steam on *When I Was Young*, his recent collaboration with producer Astrid Monroe. On this album, the industrial figurehead resembles a bard loitering in a goth club restroom, rambling over fourth-rate trip-hop beats. And this is a man who once injected his scrotum's blood into his arm in public.

It's pitiful that Cabaret Voltaire's Richard H. Kirk didn't release the solo experiments featured on *Earlier/Later* 25 years ago. Long before the Cabs chiseled anti-funk grooves out of the over-saturated mediascape, Kirk had already mastered the tape looping of drones, guitar blurts and drum machines. Highlights here include the "Immaculate Riot" of toy soldiers smacking into a wall, the robotic ethnodelica of "Kinshasa Express" and the mentally scarred electro-funk of "Martyrs of Palestine."

By the early '90s, Kirk grew tired of the graveyard shift at the factory, veering into Detroit techno, African dance and acid house territory as Sandoz. *Digital Lifeforms Redux* reissues Sandoz's 1993 debut and B-sides from this period. Despite the voodoo bump 'n' grind of "Medium Cool" and the Aphexian bounce of "Chocolate Machine," little of

the music holds water today. The rhythms are often meant for armchair dancing—alas, they were the first to be hyped as "intelligent dance music."

Skinny Puppy has recently reunited and will still annoy parents who turn off their porch-lights every Halloween. These Canadians led industrial's third-wave, setting the sexualized carnage of Reagan-era slasher flicks to a death-disco beat. On *The Greater Wrong*, they polish their synthesized funk-metal standard to scream "state of the art." But despite peculiar moments—like the goth-dancehall of "Goneja"—Skinny Puppy's new material subverts nothing, remaining teen fodder for Hot Topic retailers and Magic the Gathering tournaments.

While many Westerners domesticated industrial for the dancefloor during the '80s, Japanese noise fetishists like Merzbow, K.K.Null and Keiji Haino bludgeoned the genre to its last gasp of white noise. Absolut Null Punkt (composed of Zeni Geva guitarist K.K.Null and Fushitsusha skinsman Seiji Murayama) recently regrouped after a 17-year hiatus and released an album of improv blowouts that summon industrial's ungodly soul. Murayama's free-jazz swordplay and Null's snakebit guitar shrieks, while DSP glitches and vocal wails all mimic a Luddite mob storming into a factory and smashing its machines into the black earth. A joyful noise. *Cameron Macdonald*

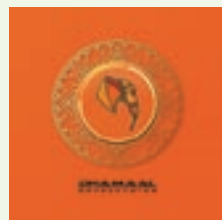


Photo: Christine Allichino

BRIAN ENO

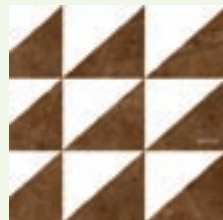
HERE COME THE WARM JETS TAKING TIGER MOUNTAIN (BY STRATEGY) ANOTHER GREEN WORLD BEFORE AND AFTER SCIENCE
Astralwerks/US/CD

Before spearheading a thousand bedroom composers' ambient aspirations, and just after he left the hedonistic romanticists Roxy Music, Brian Eno created four albums where he sang. These albums were not thought as groundbreaking as what would come after, but they left an undeniable imprint on popular music—and, as Astralwerks' reissues illustrate, they're still innovative. Heard in succession, there's a beautiful chronology to them; they move from the art-glam of *Here Come The Warm Jets* to the oblique strategies that determined *Taking Tiger Mountain*, onward to the stunted fourth-world strata-funk of *Another Green World* and the summarization of *Before and After Science*. Though these have hardly been unavailable, the excuse to listen once again is sweet enough. *Alexis Georgopoulos*



AEROC VISCIOUS SOLID
Ghostly/US/CD

Geoff White departs from his typical minimal techno sound—well documented on releases for Cytrax, Force Inc and Traum—with his debut release for Ann Arbor's Ghostly. As Aeroc, White indulges his sentimental side, strumming feathery acoustic guitar against ruffled, glitchy beats that mimic brushed snares and cymbals. On tracks like "My Love, The Wave Break," a surprisingly jazzy sensibility bubbles up in the murky chords, but White never indulges lounge clichés. Instead, as the angular "Rusted Dress Up" and the muddy "Wish Eyes" demonstrate, White succeeds in finding a middle ground between Dabrye's hip-hop leanings and Two Lone Swordsman's most experimental aquatic moments. *Philip Sherburne*



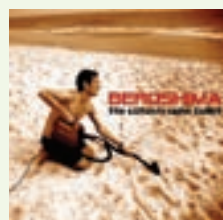
AIR LIQUIDE LET YOUR EARS BE THE RECEIVER
Multicolor/GER/CD

It may be true that German outfit Air Liquide has influenced the Cologne sound, but there's not much shuffle fever or minimal click to their comeback album. Instead, these acid electro pioneers throw together a rather bizarre collection of dubby downtempo numbers, pumping mega-club techno and even confessional electro-meets-country & western jams. The only unifying elements here are bright, round-sounding bassines and crisp 808 high hats, but even those classics aren't enough to save these veterans from an overwhelmingly trite record. *Tyra Banqz*



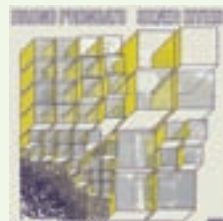
BLACK SUN EMPIRE DRIVING INSANE
BSE/NETH/2xCD

Catapulting into the international drum & bass spotlight with their self-titled imprint in early 2002, the three-headed beast known as Black Sun Empire now delivers devastating floor-killers and deep and heavy beats on their debut LP, *Driving Insane*. BSE showcases a unique sound influenced by the sweeping melodies, epic drops and dirty beats of trance and techno, but not to worry—his is still strychnine-laced hardcore drum & bass, and VIP collaborations and remixes from Ill Skillz, Concord Dawn and Kemal ensure this release will drive dark d&b fans insane. *Chris Muniz*



CIËLO UN AMOR MATÓ EL FUTURO
GIRLS ON FILM #1
Click New Wave/SPA/CD

Besides a label, these two albums also share musicians, with Ciëlo's Cocó and Mario working with visual artist Ana Laura Aláez to comprise *Girls on Film*. The collaboration on #1 comes off unevenly—the album's mix of synth-pop and dreamy sounds works on the layered "Geometry," but stumbles with too many breathy and insubstantial vocals, as on "Floating." On *Un Amor Mató El Futuro*, Ciëlo doesn't fare much better; they try for upbeat robot pop, but come off sounding like a poor Kraftwerk imitation. *Luciana Lopez*



MATTHEW DEAR BACKSTROKE
Spectral/US/CD
OUTPUTMESSAGE ONEIROSEchelon/US/CD

With *Leave Luck To Heaven's* maverick microhouse/pop still sweetening our ears, Detroit's Matthew Dear quickly returns with the darker, more tribal-inflected mini-LP, *Backstroke*. "Tide" is a deeper variation on Dear's classic "Dog Days," while "Takes On You" delves into Porter Ricks-style heroin house. Elsewhere, Dear chills out Surgeon's frantic Latin shuffle techno to a coolly chugging glide and evokes German electronic pioneers Harmonia. Outputmessage's ornately melodic, intricate techno nabbed him a spot on Ghostly's acclaimed *Idol Tryouts* comp and remixing duties for Dabrye's "Payback." His promising debut EP, *Oneiros*, though perhaps too indebted to '90s Warp-style IDM, oozes dreamy melodies and executes leg-baffling rhythms with surprising depth for a 21-year-old. *Dave Segal*



DIGITEK KEEP THE WORLD GUESSIN'
Zebra Traffic/UK/CD

England's Zebra Traffic label continues to impress, here loosing the full-length debut from Brighton's five-man Digitek crew. Where labelmate Cappo has forged his own distinctively Northern style, these South Coasters align themselves with London's bounce scene, sporting the influence of ragga and garage on this sharply produced LP. For all the breathless poetics of MCs Buzz and Junior Red, producers Pablo and Warwick best their vocal counterparts, conjuring the sort of tightly compressed beats that induce palpitations in the faint of heart. Beat fiends take note. *Martin Turznee*

DJ SPOOKY CELESTIAL MECHANIX: THE BLUE SERIES MASTERMIX
Thirsty Ear/US/CD

Thirsty Ear's Blue Series has put out so much good music—from pianist Matthew Shipp's avant compositions to the work of the now-defunct (and dearly missed) Antipop Consortium—that it would be hard to screw up a double album that slices and dices from their catalog. The first *Celestial Mechanix* CD is a series of Spooky's remixes of previous Blue Series work; CD two is a 35-track mix that culls from the label's 29 Blue Series albums. The two discs share an atmospheric, jazzy vibe mixed in with hip-hop rhymes and spoken word appearances. *Celestial Mechanix* presents a serious education about the influence jazz has upon so much good music. *Luciana Lopez*

DOM & ROLAND CHRONOLOGY
Moving Shadow/UK/CD

Dom & Roland's third album, *Chronology*, is a drum & bass fanatic's wet dream. As usual, D&R pulverizes you with digital brutality, floor-shaking basslines, cinematic atmospherics and breakneck beats. Skynet and Kemal remain merciless on two collaborative tracks, and the record also includes dancefloor-smashing, and potentially classic, remixes by Hive, Calyx and the triple team of Dieselboy, Kaos, and Karl K. If you're a d&b diehard, *Chronology* merits praise and repeat play; if you're not, it's just another dark 'n' deadly mindfuck. *Sean O'Neal*

DNA DNA ON DNA
No More/US/CD
DR.MIX WALL OF NOISE AND THE REMIXAcute/US/CD

For those raised on today's post-No Wave fallout, the spastic originality of DNA may not astonish the way it did in 1978; perhaps because so many bands have, consciously or not (but probably the former), plundered their incredible sound. Still, that doesn't diminish DNA's originality, or the spastic spell their condensed electrical drone jolts induce. Dr. Mix, the last in the line of newly reissued Metal Urbain projects, also revels in the shock-joy of pure electricity and texture. With drum machines and guitars in tow, the French group romps through covers of The Stooges, The Seeds, Velvet Underground and Bowie, sharing its sparse approach with Suicide and laying the seeds for Spacemen 3, Jesus & Mary Chain, and the rest of the drone rock contingent that continues to this day. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

THE ETERNALS OUT OF PROPORTION
THE ETERNALS RAWAR STYLEAntifaz/PR/CD

Sophisticated and angular dub rock where Jamaican roots get bent into a wiry frame of percussive post-rock from the Chicago school. 2001's *Out of Proportion* traffics in a spare, slow burn of reggae and imposing, impressive weirdness. "Son We Don't Want You Here" rattles with a restrained steel drum, pockmarks of glitch and shouty passive aggressive vocals. *Rawar Style's* the new album—markedly more confrontational, and shot through with a jittery anxiety. *Selena Hsu*

FAUST VS. DÄLEK DERBE RESPECT, ALDER
Klangbad & Staubgold/GER/CD

Faust vs. dälek is one of the most highly progressive/regressive albums in recent memory. Strafing three nonconcurring sessions together under a fire of frothing percussion, seismic bass yawns and malevolent verb, German aggressive angst editors Faust and New Jersey grit-spewing hip-hop trio dälek maliciously test the membrane separating headspace from cosmic space. Not quite as dense and unforgiving as dälek's own material, or as unhinged and shard-filled as Faust's, the staggering loops and drones of *Alder* still embody a well-informed primitivism, an urgent howl as the participants grapple with each other's natures. *Tony Ware*

FRED EVERYTHING LIGHT OF DAY
20:20 Vision/UK/CD

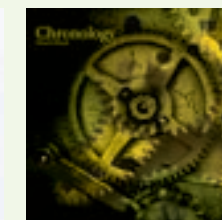
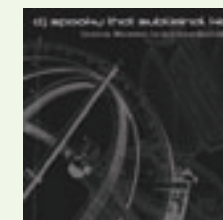
House music is never stale when Fred Everything is at the controls. On his second album, this Canadian outshines most house maestros with smooth elegance, crystal clean production and a racy irresistibility. He elaborately integrates elements of nu-jazz, reggae, Latin, '80s electro and liquid funk into a solid deep house structure. Ranging from jazzy breakbeat to straight 4/4, each track on the unmixed yet fluid *Light Of Day* bumps and grinds gracefully with sexiness and soul. Vocals from Roy Davis Jr., DJ Heather, Joseph Malik and others only add to this winning collection of catchy, heartfelt serenades. *Sean O'Neal*



DAS BIERBEBEN

NO FUTURE NO PAST Shitkatapult/GER/CD

From the opening onslaught of "Readyroom," there's no need to ask what Germany's Das Bierbeben (The Beerdrinkers) are doing on techno-punk head-banger T.Raumschmiere's Shitkatapult label. The double-time synth attack and 17-part shrieking vocals are easily as bombastic as anything the gear-destroying label honcho has ever done. But at heart, Das Bierbeben don't want to junk society, they want to funk it. And funk they do—on tinny electro-disco tracks like "Staub," which sounds like an 8-bit Metro Area fronted by Nena, and "Mach Deinen Fernseher Kaputt" which adds a metallic tinge before unspooling into a rickety garage rocker. *Philip Sherburne*



FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON PRESENT AMORPHOUS ANDROGYNOUS
THE OTHERNESS
Psychobaby/US/CD

Early '90s technorganic darlings FSOL (a.k.a. Amorphous Androgynous) have finally gone prog. Brian "Stakker Humanoid" Dougans and Garry "Gaz" Cobain prepared for the millennium within the Galaxial Pharmaceutical studios, recording *Alice in Ultraland*—which ultimately became 2002's *The Isness*. The binary pair then compiled the leftovers of the long, strange trip into *The Otherness*. Tracks like "Elysian Feels (Abbey Road Version)" and "She Sells Electric Ego" (written for Gaz's LA pal Ian "The Cult" Astbury) subsume harpsichord and sitar plucks, zoning on psychedelia. Think *Ummagumma*-era Pink Floyd and King Crimson heaped with extra self-indulgence, cock-rock guitars and ELO samples. *Stacy Meyn*

GD LUXXE BETWEEN ZERO AND ETERNITY
Ersatz Audio/US/CD
BEROSHIMA THE CATASTROPHE BALLETMuller/GER/CD

Austrian talent Gerhard Potuznik has several feathers in his musical cap, including producing the remarkable Electronicat album *21st Century Toy* last year. Unfortunately, Potuznik's newest full-length (under his electroclash moniker GD Luxxe) isn't quite as compelling, leaning heavily on dark, dated synth-based industrial rock for what sounds like an exercise in affectation. Still, Potuznik's album sounds positively cutting-edge compared to the awkward club tunes of Frank Müller (founder of Germany's Müller imprint) under his Beroshima moniker. With clunky synths and bubble-gum trance overlays, *Catastrophe* sounds embarrassingly dated—something downright inexcusable from one of the largest techno labels in the business. *Janet Tzou*



ELLEN ALLIEN

REMIX COLLECTION Asphodel/US/CD

Berlin-based techno songstress Ellen Allien seems simultaneously in love with the sonics of experimental electronic—the clicks and the crunches, the scrapes and the scrunches—and the form and frameworks of pop music. Delightfully, the producer/DJ manages to have her cake and eat it, creating the former from the palette of the latter. Her self-explanatory *Remix Collection* showcases her astute skill in managing this process, filtering tracks by the likes of Sascha Funke, Gold Chains and Covenant through the Allien aesthetic. The delightful collection’s sleeve shows branches of a tree feeding to and from Allien’s body, which could be a metaphor for the results of her remixing: The new versions are akin to mutant hybrids, their origins readily identifiable back to the originals, but also to Allien herself. *David Hemingway*

EZEKIEL HONIG PEOPLE, PLACES & THINGS Single Cell/US/CD

The NYC-based loner likes it soft and somber. Clicky techno beats tap lightly beneath the charmingly spliced buzz, clank and clatter of everyday life. Temperate textures drone peacefully and compassionately. *People, Places & Things* is minimal on the outside, but dense once you gently sink to the middle. Once you’re there, heartfelt emotion seeps through, a bursting gushiness of the My Bloody Valentine kind. Add to that sound the dissonant click-techno of Process, the found-sound playfulness of Matthew Herbert and the cute, catchy melodies of ISAN, and you get an album of alluring tranquility and entrancing, drugged-out lullabies. *Sean O’Neal*

JET BLACK CRAYON INACCURACIES OF THE MIND MACHINE Function 8/US/CD
MINUS STORY THE CAPTAIN IS DEAD LET THE DRUM CORPSE DANCE Jagjaguwar/US/CD

Hit the interstate with nothing but a full tank of gas, a clean shirt in the trunk, Jet Black Crayon’s latest streaming from the rolled down windows, and just drive. *Inaccuracies of the Mind Machine* rolls along the open road with an easy grace. The songs coast, mellow, evoking the passing blur of highway signs in the dusty sun and the thrill of a perfectly banked curve. Meanwhile, Minus Story’s *The Captain is Dead...* is like a fable illustrated for children, but with eerie, perverse, adult themes lurking in the shadows of the naive drawings. This is haunting and perplexing lo-fi symphonic pop that rattles, lurches, moans and sings in chorus. *Selena Hou*

KID 606 WHO STILL KILL SOUND? Tigerbeat 6/US/CD

From the jump, *Who Still Kill Sound?* announces the return of Miguel Depedro at his bratty best, shaking off the relative consonance of last year’s *Kill Sound Before Sound Kills You*. Numbers like “Slammin’ Ragga Bootleg Track” and “Live Acid Jam” are suitably titled, as is “Robitussin Motherfucker,” a tribute to Houston’s DJ Screw, the progenitor of the chopped and screwed remix. Even after imbibing a bottle of cough syrup, the Kid can’t help but turn his

chillout comps? His austere gaseous music is the chilliest, most out-there of all. And *Nuuk* (originally part of Big Cat’s 1997 Driftworks box set) sonically embodies Greenland winters’ frigidly majestic beauty. *Nuuk*’s vast bliss-scapes put the ice in isolationism. On *Tokyo + 1*, Thomas Brinkmann extracts experimental-techno gold out of field recordings from his wanderings in Tokyo and Greece. This aural souvenir boasts Brinkmann’s typically hypnotic, texturally fascinating groove science, reinforcing his rep as one of our most conceptually rigorous and effective minimal-techno surgeons. *Dave Szgal*

KONK THE SOUND OF KONK Soul Jazz/UK/CD

If Gang of Four has provided the spastic, trebly reference point of most recent disco punk, Konk surely has contributed to the solid rhythmic backbone of the genre. Their influence on !!! is unquestionable, at least. Relishing in the melting pot of late-1970s New York, the band fused their post-punk approach with skewed but learned takes on soca, Latin jazz, salsa and nascent hip-hop to create a racially ambiguous but undeniably upbeat dance sound. And though Soul Jazz has left off a few of Konk’s most uncommon pleasures, this is a welcome introduction. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

KENNY LARKIN THE NARCISSIST Peacefrog/UK/CD

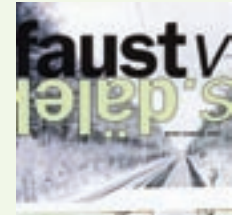
It’s been six years since veteran techno producer Kenny Larkin released a full-length album (he’s been busy pursuing a stand-up comedy career). While it’s reassuring that Larkin’s minimal, atmospheric take on moody Detroit melodies withstands the test of time, *Narcissist* can hardly be called some of his most innovative work (repeatedly intoning “merci beaucoup” feels more weary than funny). Still, nice jazz bits creep into “A Part of Me,” comprising a lovely interlude, and some of Larkin’s familiar rhythmic agility surfaces on “Breathe,” a study in rhythms and beat. Here’s hoping the next six years yield a more fully realized collection from this respected Detroit master. *Janet Tzou*

M83 DEAD CITIES, RED SEAS & LOST GHOSTS Mute/US/CD

Sometimes you play music. Other times music plays you. French duo M83 picks up where Air left off, and creates something that could be called electrogaze. *Dead Cities, Red Seas & Lost Ghosts* delivers the melancholy promised by the title, with tidal sweeps of synthesizer and wordless sighs tumbling throughout, but the mysterious uplift of bands like Spiritualized is at play here too. Choruses of organs, digital murmurs, burbling drum machines and more combine to create a sonic vortex that is all but impossible not to fall into. Simultaneously forbidding and inviting, M83 delivers the comfort of the familiar along with the shock of the new. *Rob Cearly*

M. CRAFT I CAN SEE IT ALL TONIGHT 679/UK/CD

Martin Craft draws from a diverse array of sources: bossanova, instrumental hip-hop, folk rock and what is now called indie rock. And though he’s obviously taken in a lot of music that’s preceded him, he doesn’t sound like anyone else in particular. But *I Can See It All Tonight* proves a frustrating listen. Its songs can’t help sounding so...normal. So busy waiting for a commercial breakthrough. So diluted. So conformed to the conventions of pop radio. So, yes, Martin Craft may be huge in the near future—perhaps even the indie rock equivalent of Norah Jones—but his descent into blandness negates the potential maverick lurking under the surface. *Alexis Georgopoulos*



JOSEPH MALIK AQUARIUS SONGS Compost/GER/CD

From the horns that open “Aquarius Song” to the live recording of “Race Relations” at the album’s end, Malik’s sophomore solo effort delivers the kind of sweet soul that recalls some of the greats of the genre. Singer/songwriter Malik, a former promoter and DJ in Scotland, has recorded with others under various monikers, but it wasn’t until 2002 that he released a solo debut, *Diverse*, in 2002. The intervening two years have been well spent—the current album is a mix of jazz, soul and various ethnic music genres, such as tango, whose intricate hand-clapping he incorporates on “Diablo.” *Luciana Lopez*



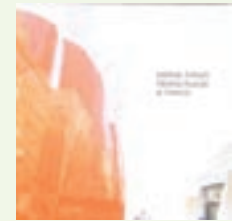
MÄRTINI BRÖS LOVE THE MACHINES Poker Flat/GER/CD

On *Love The Machines*, Berlin’s DJ Clé and Mike Vamp (better known as Märtini Brös) ride the fine line between obnoxious and irresistible—on purpose, it seems. Rocking out with their cocks out—it’s 1986!—the duo delivers 13 glittering electro-pop/techno-wave/robot rock ditties doused with quirky vocals, plunging basslines, stabbing synth-tones and razor-sharp percussion. The tracks are designed to charm you, annoy you and linger in your head for days; they’re playfully goofy and exceedingly serious at the same time. *Sean O’Neal*



MASTA ACE A LONG HOT SUMMER M3/US/CD

Perhaps the only artist to have collaborated with both Eminem and Paul Barman, Brooklyn’s Masta Ace belongs to that class of good-but-not-great New York MCs forced underground by major label shenanigans. A loosely conceptual account of an indie rapper on the come-up, Ace’s fifth album plays like a prequel to 2001’s *Disposable Arts*, showcasing his tirelessly modifiable delivery and beats from DJ Spinna and Dug Infinite, among others. Heads will skip straight to “Good Ol’ Love,” a poignant 9th Wonder-produced joint made for moonlit smoke sessions. Indeed, few LPs this year will deliver more soul per square inch than this album, which proceeds leisurely enough for even the wooziest of weed heads. If you’ve got ‘em, smoke ‘em. *Martin Turenne*



MIŁOSH YOU MAKE ME FEEL Plug Research/US/CD

You Make Me Feel might be the first album to meld neo-soul with click-hop. On “Time Steals the Day” and “The Sky Is Grey,” crunchy bit-maps and rich melodic pulses stand in for next-century 2-step while Miłosh sings like Craig David on qualudes. Most of the record continues in this vein, with rain noises and windshield-wiper sounds comprising a melancholy backdrop for brooding, buried vocal swaths. Elsewhere, tonal instrumental numbers—“Push,” “Creepy”—create miniscule worlds where baroque music box figurines slowly whirl. This album is beautifully haunting, and, true to its title, full of feeling. *Vivian Hoat*



MOODYMANN BLACK MAHOGANI Peacefrog/UK/CD

Equally reclusive and prolific, Moodymann (a.k.a. Kenny Dixon Jr.) writes loping, laidback music that burrows into the mind, unfurling deft keyboard flourishes from subtly raw production that has as much to do with jazz and blues traditions as modern house music. Make no mistake—a song like “I’m Doing Fine” devastates dance-floor with its sonar ping, four-note Rhodes hook and soulful vocals from Amp Fiddler. But even though Moodymann writes songs that turn into underground anthems, his most important musical contribution is a constant exploration and refinement of soul music. With humorous but pointed use of blaxploitation samples on “Back at Bakers” and “Mahogani 9000” and a sequencing style that keeps songs to their bare, elegant essentials, *Black Mahogani* is a paragon of inventive, emotive sound where pleasure lies not in gimmickry but in the groove. *Peter Nicholson*



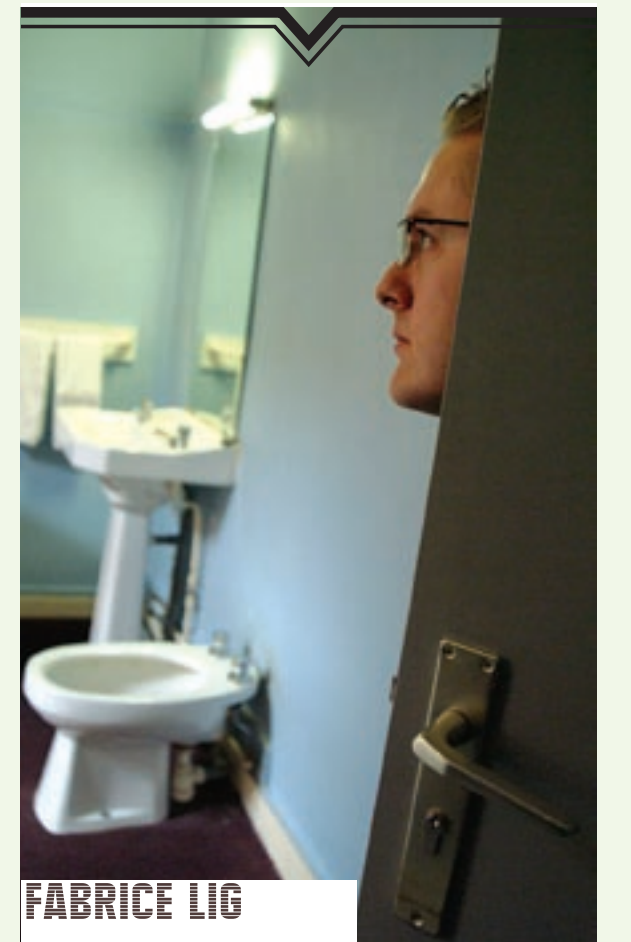
ORBITAL BLUE ALBUM Orbital Music/UK/CD

Orbital’s seventh and final record, *Blue Album*, purveys all the loopy soaring techno and introspective downtempo breaks one has come to expect from these veteran rave mainstays, and if the brothers Hartnoll were trying to sell these shimmering, chimerical tracks as something new I’d be pished. But as it stands, *Blue Album* is a fitting coda to the pair’s 15-year career, proving that they still make

uplifting acid better than most (“Lost,” “Acid Pants”), but also that they’re fresh out of groundbreaking ideas (“Tunnel Vision,” “You Lot”). Progressive house progenitors Fluke also sound dated as they issue their fifth album, *Puppy*, which is full of swirling, big-room rave sounds. Once upon a time, this stuff sounded hedonistic and futuristic—these days, it sounds more like the backing track to the latest car commercial. *Vivian Hoat*

PAN AMERICAN QUIET CITY Kranky/US/CD

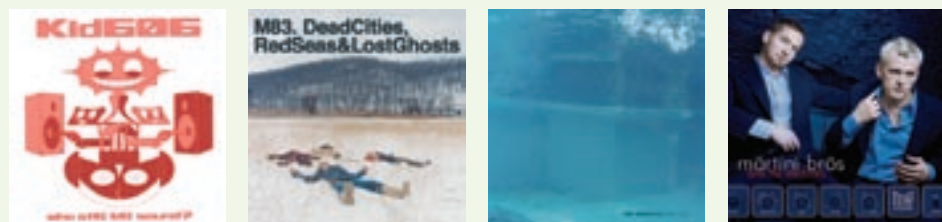
Sometimes, when geniuses slip out of sight, you forget that they are still plying their trade, hidden away from machinations of the media. After Pan American’s two-year hiatus (and with their last album slightly less than desirable), scrutiny is high. Their new album delivers, demonstrating that words could never convey the understated eloquence of Pan American’s brilliant musical theorem. A songwriter’s poetic melding of the organic and digital, filled with delicate twilight hues, *Quiet City* is absolutely essential. *J. David Marston*



FABRICE LIG

MY 4 STARS Kanzleramt/GER/CD

Belgium’s Fabrice Lig is perhaps the most American of European technoists, a producer who well understands that machine music need not always sound machine made. The roots coursing underneath New York, Chicago and Detroit have rarely been so meticulously exposed as on *My 4 Stars*, Lig’s best full-length to date. The title track is emblematic of the whole, propelled by a feathery kick, screwdriving analog synths and a classically uplifting diva turn. Elsewhere, “In My Arms” appears twice; first as a disco-tech midtempo number, then as a lachrymose cabaret piece minus the former’s cowbells and propulsive kick. Best among the tunes here is “My Old Friend,” a boomy ode to the Windy City marked by Nicolas Lefèvre’s plaintive sax figures and Lig’s intricately cross-hatched drum schematics. Striking in its compositional scope and sonic integrity, *My 4 Stars* eulogizes the last two decades of American dance music—a tribute that’s equal parts irreverent, poignant and celebratory. *Martin Turenne*



PARK ATTACK LAST DROP AT HIDE OUT
Tigersushi/FRA/CD

Just when you thought you had Paris's hippest label, Tigersushi, all figured out, they throw yet another curve ball at you. Unlike their labelmates, Park Attack doesn't make disco, punky house or reverse-engineered EBM. The Glaswegian trio, who comes to Tigersushi via the label's Scottish partner, Oscarr, pounds away on trash-can drums and *Confusion Is Sex*-era drones. Suddenly, it's 1982 again—and in basements across the world, kids are using punk rock to make virtues out of their limitations. The singer's shrieks make The Slits sound like lounge singers, but cool organ tones offer a cold compress to keep the pain away. *Philip Sherburne*

ROSY PARLANE IRIS
Touch/UK/CD

Sometime Christian Fennesz-collaborator Rosy Parlane apparently constructs his recordings from sample

loops, pianos, guitars and field recordings manipulated by digital means, but these named sound sources are barely discernible in his expansive drone pieces. Unlike fellow Touch artist Chris Watson, Parlane offers no clues or signposts as to the origin of his found sounds, and tracks are simply labeled "Part 1," "Part 2" and "Part 3." Like much drone music, *Iris* frequently hints at eschatological concerns, but Parlane chips at his tracks' backbones with fidgety, skittering noise: The unidentified skree in "Part 1" is evocative of sounds as disparate as running water, close-contact recordings of ants devouring rotting fruit or static emanating from the sun. *David Hemingway*

PHOENIX ALPHABETICAL
Astralwerks/US/CD

French quartet Phoenix has contemporaries—claiming fellow Gallic stadiophiles Air and Daft Punk as friends—yet their music is imbued with little "contemporary." The band's m.o. remains soft rock AM, though at times

edging towards more. Constructed in an acoustically dead practice space, Phoenix's sophomore album, *Alphabetical*, comes across crisp, flat and sincere. Compared to United, Phoenix's dancefloor-acknowledging synth-rock debut, *Alphabetical* is as good a defense for Hall & Oates faux funk as can be produced today. *Tony Ware*

PRINCE PO THE SLICKNESS
Lex/UK/CD

A nation of hip-hop heads mourned the demise of Organized Konfusion, the seminal '90s group that stretched the idea of rap lyricism with cuts like "Releasing Hypnotical Gases" and "Bring It On." And while Pharoahe Monch successfully re-invented himself with a Rawkus record deal and hits like "Simon Says" and "Oh No," his equally talented partner Prince Po toiled in underground purgatory with some duly overlooked projects. Until now. Leave it to a young LA producer and a British record label to revive the career of this New York emcee. Madlib, Danger Mouse and J-Zone create the background for Po's mesmerizing delivery here, and each track drips with heart and soul as a classic voice collaborates with the best of today's talent. Long live the Prince. *DJ Anna*

BRUNO PRONSATO SILVER CITIES
(A)PENDING SHUFFLE
THE LAVENDER NEGLECT
Orac/US/CD

Microhouse, being small and easily compressed, can be transmitted clear around the world these days. Steven Ford received the transmission in Seattle and it transformed him into Bruno Pronsato, whose *Silver Cities* is full of clicky grooves tweaked to the breaking point. Tiny samples and gurgles hover and dart around his rhythms, yet the undeniable pulse of "Women in Large Coats" and the Teutonic stomp of "Kuche" are aimed at swaying hips first. (A)pendics Shuffle pares sounds down even further, gleefully assembling miniature-scale house from the skips and blips left on a half-erased disk. *Rob Geary*

THE RIP OFF ARTIST NEW CLEAR DAYS
Inflatabl/US/CD

Does the thought of atoms being smashed strike fear into your heart? The Rip Off Artist is happy to help. *New Clear Days* serves as a primer on the joys and dangers of nuclear power. Its first third edits sounds into glittering, jagged pieces that almost (but not quite) fit back together, creating herky-jerky tunes like "Too Cheap to Meter" that vibrate like excited electrons. A middle section shifts into irradiated ambiance, unsettled by the clicks of a lonely Geiger counter. You'll sleep better after the third section, where tracks like "Duck and Cover" recover a loony humor among the radioactivity. *Rob Geary*

SALVATORE TEMPO
Racing Junior/NOR/CD

Salvatore is a Norwegian group whose John McEntire (Tortoise)-produced LP, *Tempo*, is finally washing up Stateside. Oh, how we should thank the Viking raiders with our fallow virgins! *Tempo* is lyric-less rock 'n' roll, with Brazilian-tinged percussion and Americana's song structure and instrumentation, all of it immersed in a spirited passion for arrangement. This is your post-rock record of the year. *J. David Marston*



MOUSE ON MARS

RADICAL CONNECTOR Thrill Jockey/US/CD

Listening to German tech-house, you might be led to believe that they're a melancholy lot. Listening to their jacked electro, you might find them hedonists. But listening to production duo Mouse on Mars (aided and abetted by instrumentalists), you'd think the country was full of hiccupping and giggling oddballs. The duo's first album since 2001, *Radical Connector* contains no clicks and clacks, though it does have party anthems. Idiosyncratic and out of line with anything overtly current—save electricity—the record finds MoM having a Rooty-tooty good time reconfiguring themselves as the Basement Jaxx of Germany. That is to say, Mouse on Mars's sounds chirp crisply, distend sloppily and crunch methodically as melodies swoop in, especially on the first three manic tracks, which are rife with meticulous abandon. On *Radical Connector*, MoM's car runs red hot then sputters and lurches through rhythmically rotund terrain. *Tony Ware*

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SCISSOR SISTERS SCISSOR SISTERS

Universal/US/CD
As smarmy and friction-filled as the sexual position for which they're named, NYC's Scissor Sisters know how to let sparks fly. "Tits On The Radio," a disc-draped reaming of Guilian's anti-skin initiative, is perhaps the finest protest song since 2 Live Crew's tossed salad days. And SS's buzz-worthy rendition of Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb," you ask? So intoxicating that even Barry Gibb, Elton John, Marc Bolan and anyone else they cut 'n' pasted would sob sequined tears of joy. *Carleton Curcio*

STARVING ARTISTS CREW

UP POPS THE SAC
Fatbeats/US/CD
They may be lacking sustenance, but the SAC's got style to spare. These guys are from Detroit, but there's something in their true-school delivery that evokes the Five Boroughs and its West Coast adaptation via J-5. With Thes One (People Under The Stairs) doing guest production on "Five Day Trippin,'" they've got more transition skits than a De La Soul record, and enough obscure jazz samples to keep the crate-diggers satiated. Long released in Japan, the singles "Ill Na Na" and "Kick Clap" alone prove that SAC can deliver a fine debut; let's just hope they stay hungry. *Daniel Siwek*

STATE OF BENGAL VS. PABAN DAS BAUL

TANA TANI
Real World/UK/CD
DHAMAAL SOUND SYSTEM
Surya Vault/US/CD
The bar's been raised over the years for the whole East/West collabo thing; happily, both these discs meet it, although with different approaches to blending their influences. On *Tana Tani*, vocalist Paban Das Baul, an Indian favorite, pairs with State of Bengal from the U.K.'s underground Asian scene. Das Baul's evocative vocals float over everything from pumping breakbeat to delicate melodies—sometimes both, as on the lush and gorgeously chill "Kali." From San Francisco collective Dhamaal Sound System comes an album that leans more toward drum & bass (with some chiller stuff, too), where the Asian influence takes less of a lead. *Luciana Lopez*

THE TIMEOUT DRAWER

PRESENT LEFT FOR THE LIVING DEAD
Chocolate Industries/US/CD
When the haze clears, Timeout Drawer's latest will dredge up somnolent memories of TNT-era Tortoise and Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here*, fed through the filter of 21st-century technoculture. But it's not just a slumber party. The churning epic "Hunting With Fire (The Most Fertile Ground For Drama)" ably channels the entire spirit of Mogwai's Young Team in only 12 minutes. And if that song's title (one of only four on the disc) is any clue, these cats get cerebral on the regular—and all without vocals. In other words, *Presents Left For the Living Dead* is a think piece of a release. If that's your bag, then these guys might be your gift. *Scott Thill*

MARTINA TOPLEY-BIRD ANYTHING

Palm/US/CD
FIONA RENSHAW LOVE IN A BUBBLE
Laws of Motion-Sirkus/UK/CD
Martina Topley-Bird's *Anything* is a reconfigured version of her Mercury Prize-nominated debut. Though the title track is a touch too mellowed, "Ragga" makes good on her unique voice and phrasing, as Topley-Bird's old runnin' partner Tricky helps her twist

and dodge among rolling rhythms. She tosses away the old trip-hop albatross by doing blues, modern R&B and teaming up with Queens of the Stone Age for a massive soul-rock anthem, "Need One." Where Topley-Bird's voice is fragile, Fiona Renshaw's is deep and strong, implying reserves of power even when she sings her most delicately on this slightly overproduced debut. *Rob Geary*

TWILIGHT CIRCUS

DUB FROM THE SECRET VAULTS
ROIR/US/CD
Ryan Moore reads aloud from his musical journal about a decade-long adventure across the sounds of the universe. Big Youth's legendary voice sent him off and, some tape delay later, he stopped by On-U's African Head Charge, where he mixed vintage sound system and Burru drumming, but not before he dined with the Arawak Indians, who taught him the sitar. He had one last night before the spacey "Lift Off," so the Bar Kays brought him "East Of Memphis," where they recalled reggae's early reliance on soul

with a heavy Hammond. All these people and places appear, and yet Moore was all alone, producing this ethnomusicological epic from the confines of his "secret dub lab." *Daniel Siwek*

VLADISLAV DELAY DEMO(N)TRACKS

Huume/GER/CD
Vladislav Delay has admitted that he mainly listens to Deee-Lite and Alicia Keys at home these days. Now hear what they possibly influenced. On *Demo(n)tracks*, Delay concocts digital dub that staggers through Berlin's industrial yards in the morning sun. The continuous mix recalls the DSP test-firings of *Anima*, yet with sharper emotion and scope. This album seemingly "builds" itself—as the recurring field recordings of saws and jackhammers of "Lokauu" and violent, echoplexed snare eruptions of "Otan Osaa" attest. Geothermal synths that recall Delay's Luomo project also haunt. Despite moments of overproduction, *Demo(n)tracks* is Delay's most arresting work yet. *Cameron Macdonald*



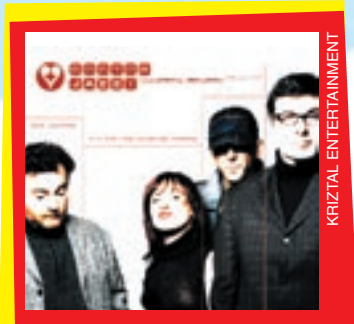
WAGON CHRIST

SORRY I MAKE YOU LUSH Ninja Tune/UK/CD
Luke Vibert's career has both echoed and contradicted that of fellow Cornwall, UK, electronic legend Richard D. James (a.k.a. Aphex Twin). Whilst the majority of the latter's work has been released through the same two labels, and his image masterfully manipulated into that of a genius/madman, the former has flitted between the great electronic indies, releasing seminal works (*Tally Ho* on Astralwerks) and mediocre records (*Musipal* on Ninja Tune) and crafted an image that bridges the mysterious and the blasé. It is for these reasons that Vibert (also known as Wagon Christ) has always seemed more endearing than James, and his gigantic fan base won't be disappointed by this latest venture. Vibert's lovingly ironic acid-house references are present to emotive effect in "Sci-Fi Staircase," while "Shadows" reminds us that *certain* individuals were making the horribly-named folktronica way back when. Vibert's magic lies in making disparate sounds into songs in the truest sense, and he does so beautifully here. *Jamie Collinson*

Photo: Grubby



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PHOENIX
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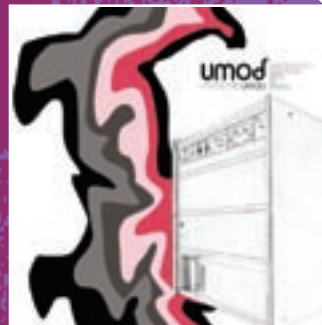
CHIEF KAMACHI
Cult Status
With his #1 single "The Best" featuring Guru leading the way, Chief Kamachi explodes onto the scene with his debut album *Cult Status*.



RODNEY HUNTER
Hunter Files
Kruder and Dorfmeister's G-Stone Recordings gives another outstanding LP to grace our ears. *Hunter Files* has the funk groove and vibe that's promoted the growth of this Vienna staple.



SAINT
Grown Folk Music
The Saint's debut opus, *Grown Folk Music* is a genre-melting effort of "Soulful-House wrapped in a Hip-Hop jacket." Features tracks from Grap Luva, Vinya Mojica, Mr. Man (Bush Babees), Reggie Watts, Leron Thomas and Tombe Lockhart.



UMOD
Enter the Umod
Longtime producer DJ Domu has flipped the script and name as well for a solid new electronic venture that mixes soul, Detroit house, hip hop, Brazilian and breaks.



SIMPLY GOOD MUSIC
Various
The next series of quality compilations from Giant Step Records, featuring Amp Fiddler, Roots Manuva, Esthero, Zap Mama, Aya, and many others.



VAST AIRE
Look Mom...No Hands
The wild wait for the new abstract uptown fire is over. The leader of the Carnival Ox crew steps out with his solo debut. *Look Mom...No Hands* represents the dusty but digital details of Vast's time spent running wild through Harlem's wide blocks.

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FABRICLIVE.16: ADAM FREELAND
Fabric/UK/CD

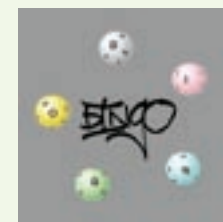
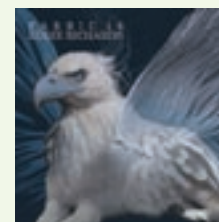
DANGEROUS DRUMS PRESENTS IT'S A BERLIN THING VOL. 3
Dangerous Drums/GER/CD

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M83. DeadCities, RedSeas&LostGhosts

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now available domestically with a bonus disc not found on any import debut north american tour in september.



"this is f'cking amazing." - vice



also available: "RunIntoFlowers" CD single & 12" (MUT 9247)

It's an oft-heard complaint in drum & bass that "darkness" ruined the scene. According to the pundits, producers started getting too technical at one point, focusing on pushing buttons and playing with new plug-ins rather than party rocking.

Oddly, for an electronic niche derived mainly of ex-drum & bass producers, the breaks scene doesn't seem to share these concerns. At least, that's how it would appear after listening to the latest round of CDs from the dark horses of the European breaks scene. These club-ready compilations—which run the gamut from Adam Freeland's crisp, rock-influenced mix to Deekline's collection of Miami bass-inflected ass-shakers to Mark One and Slaughter Mob's off-kilter grime rhythms on Rephlex—show that, when put together right, rough and angry sounds fuel, rather than alienate, dance-floors.

Adam Freeland, proprietor of the Marine Parade label, can lay partial claim to establishing the "nu-skool breaks" genre, but refuses to be pigeonholed on his recent Fabriclive mix. The disc contains plenty of the crisp, distinctively machine-made bounce nu-skool is known for, but swirling, shoegaze-ready guitars underpin numerous tracks, especially Evil Nine's remixes of Pet's "Super Pet" and UNKLE's "Reign." Freeland tweaks the 16-track ride with plenty of surprises, throwing in shimmer-

ing tech-house numbers from Justice & Gambit and M.A.N.D.Y., LFO's genre-shattering acid techno stormer "Freak"; and leading off the disc with a bluesy rock number from indie darlings Black Rebel Motorcycle Club.

On *It's A Berlin Thing Vol. 3*, German crew Dangerous Drums gives breaks a decidedly trippy spin, twirling out 28 tracks full of spiraling synth leads and dubbed-out samples. Tracks like The Tea Leaf Family's trance-inducing "Snake Charmer" and King's "Heccpaw" wouldn't be out of place in the side arena of a free techno party—they've got enough tweaky touches to drive hippie travelers and their hemp-leashed dogs into whirling dervish mode. While the CD may have benefited from a paring down of tracks, it shows the Berliners to be more open-minded than the British when it comes to breaks—the beats here range from '95-era drum & bass style (JayVee & BastelBeat's "Pump 'N' Refresh") to plucky broken beat shuffles (Rococo's "Louis XV").

Meanwhile, back in a corner of East London, two-step garage offshoot grime slowly festers, its viral breakbeat worm infecting ravers, journalists and IDM factions alike. Apex Twin's Rephlex imprint dives straight into the heart of the beast on *Grime*, a showcase of tracks they've licensed from Mark One, Plasticman and Slaughter Mob.

It's no surprise Apex is into this stuff—it mixes the dangerous feel and hard-hitting breaks of old school hardcore with mind-warping Nintendo basslines and rule-bending beat sensibilities.

If you're looking to delve into grime, though, *Bingo Beats Vol. 3* might prove a better introduction. Label head Zinc—who has proven as adept at 130 bpm as he is at 170—has wisely chosen grime stalwart Slimzee to mix up this collection of future classics, which starts off with rather straight-forward breaks from Armour and Horsepower Productions and soon delves into nasty, off-kilter poundings from Wizzbit, Geeneus and Wonder, overlaid with fiendish vocals from MCs Dirty Doogz and Dizzee Rascal.

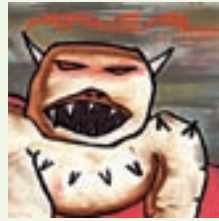
Perhaps the most accessible collection of the lot is DJ Deekline and Ollywood's *Hardcore Beats* compilation, which works gigantic, Miami-style bass and classic breaks into a formula that is party pleasing, but avoids the cheesy samples and trance touches that make so-called "funky breaks" so nauseous. Veteran MCs the Ragga Twins—who, along with Shut Up and Dance, defined the first wave of UK breaks—host this show, bringing the genre appropriately full circle back to its proto-drum & bass beginnings. *Tyra Bangs*



ADA

BIS NEUNZEHN Areal/GER/CD

Areal proves that the sound of Cologne doesn't begin and end with the city's internationally recognized minimal techno chug. The label's second mixed compilation presents a dozen tracks from its core acts, slipping from Konfekt's gauzy dream states to Ada's emotion-overload click-house to Metope's post-trance wallop. The common denominator is a spangled acid touch that makes every bleep and bleating synthesizer line sparkle. Fans of Kompakt and Sub Static will inhale this eagerly, but the buzz is unpredictable, swinging from euphoria to melancholy in a few bars. Is it microhouse? Macrohouse? There are no obvious catch-alls for Areal's sound—just a monumental mass that recedes in the distance no matter how doggedly you pursue it. *Philip Sherburne*



4HERO: THE REMIX ALBUM

Raw Canvas/UK/2xCD

Borne out of the early breakbeat era, the legendary duo known as 4hero have since evolved into one of the dance community's most influential and infamous pioneers. Able to take on the influences and tempos of a number of genres and make them their own, Marc Mac and DeGo have built a career on merging the organic with the synthetic in a mind-blowing way. Fans of Jazzanova, Bugz in the Attic, King Britt and Nuyorican Soul will find themselves at home as the pair revisits the past and charts a funky course through nu-jazz, soul, house, broken beat and just straight up cool. With the first disc featuring the duo in remix mode before they get the reverse treatment on the second, grab this one on sight, as it's some long overdue essential listening. *Chris Muniz*



THE ANTIDOTE (MIXED BY DJ DARA)

Breakbeat Science/US/CD

IN THE RED (MIXED BY PISH POSH)

Timelapse Audio/US/CD

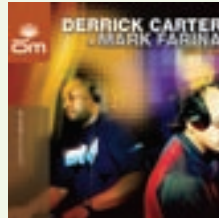
Unlike fellow breakbeat scientist DB, who changes his sound from CD to CD, DJ Dara always aims his mixes straight at the drum & bass dancefloor. Who can blame him, since he's been tearing it up for five years with the most successful national d&b tour, Planet of the Drums? Though Dara's mixing and programming is always impeccable, and he selects tracks from notable groundbreakers like SKC, Mathematics and Breakage, *The Antidote* doesn't offer anything groundbreaking. On *In The Red*, fellow NYC resident Pish Posh develops a nice journey, boasting an impressive selection of strictly North American tracks. *Ryan Romana*



BAADASSS!: ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK

BBE/US/CD

Badass, but not quite the dramatically elongated *BAADASSS!*, director Mario Van Peeble's satisfying soundtrack plays like a greatest hits album—an ode to all things black and feisty. MVP has assembled classic fight songs like Miriam Makeba's "Lamumba" and his father's storied title-track "Sweetback's Theme," to which *BAADASSS!* pays homage. But we've all heard that stuff before in college. It's the modern tracks that give this soundtrack its legs: "Cou Cou," a new and fantastically cool cut from Zap Mama, Antibalas (this generation's Fela Kuti), and Pete Rock with Pharoahe Monch all stick it to the man real nice. *Carleton Curtis*



BENEATH THE SURFACE

Moods & Grooves/US/CD

Moods & Grooves has outgrown its reputation as just a house label. The importance founder Mike Grant places on diverse musical architecture pays off on *Beneath the Surface*, a meticulously constructed and eclectic musical passage. The compilation weaves through Rick Wade's haunting acapellas and John Tejada's fast-paced keyboard tweaks, winding up with the funky, downtempo "Is It Cool" by Andres, all of which leaves the listener stranded in the hallway between the dance arena and the chill-out lounge. *Jenn Marston*



CAIPIRINHA: 14 TRACKS FOR DRINKING AND DANCING THE GIRLS FROM IPANEMA: FROM ASTRUD TO BEBEL SAMBA SOUL GROOVE

Pure Brazil/US/CD

Pure Brazil plunders the Universal catalog for three of 12 CDs honoring Brazilian music from the 1950s forward. A cocktail (and a variation of the Brazilian word for hillbilly), *Caipirinha* rumbles with Rio and Salvador hits by maestros Caetano Veloso, Gal Costa and Gilberto Gil. *The Girls From Ipanema* adores bossanova, as divas Astrud and Bebel Gilberto lead the way for classy chanteuses to party hearty. *Samba Soul Groove* bristles with '70s favela faves from the era when guitarist Jorge Ben Jor electrified samba. Toss together an actual caipirinha (recipe is provided) and top off with Pure Brazil. *Stacy Meyn*

DERRICK CARTER & MARK FARINA: LIVE AT OM

Om/US/CD

Recorded live at Om's San Francisco monthly, longtime friends Carter and Farina flex their skills and styles, pairing flawless crossfader action with tracky Chicago house. Disc 1 finds Farina deploying his trademark blend of jacked funk and vocal oddities, with squelchy craziness from Cajmere and Land Shark's Trax-esque "Tie Me Up" as highlights. On the second disc, Carter keeps the mixing tight but introduces a disco feel with two cuts from Stacy Kidd and Backroom Production's "Classic Vibe." Pumping stuff from two DJs whose techniques perfectly match their taste. *Peter Nicholson*



DJ-KICKS: THE BLACK EDITION

IK7/GER/CD

A vain attempt to breathe new life into the mash-up phenomenon, The Black Edition finds IK7 associates SST & Superdefekt pilfering the company's back catalog for mixable fodder. As such, you'll find a vocal by Dani Siciliano gliding over Swayzak's "I Dance Alone," and Mike Ladd getting all hot and bothered over Princess Superstar's "Do It Like A Robot." Well-blended though this disc may be, newbies looking for an introduction to the label would be better off buying last year's unmashed two-disc label compilation instead of this bastard child. *Martin Turenne*



ELECTRIC GYPSYLAND

Six Degrees/US/CD

Until this compilation, traditional gypsy music remained uncolonized by modern dance music. The Balkan music of groups like Taraf de Haidouks and Kocani Orkestar, brimming with polyrhythms and bursting with banjos, horns, and exuberant vocals, provides fantastic material for Six Degrees' crew of remixers. Senor Coconut turns "Usti, Usti Baba" into a shuffletech ska horn throwdown, while Bigga Bush takes "L'Orient est Roots" into deep dub terrain. This is the kind of music one wants from global dance/ethnic crossovers: joyfully funky, immediately recognizable, and yet unique in its original gypsy flavor. *Rob Geary*



EM:T 0003

Em:t/UK/CD

FUZZY BOOMBOX V.2

Fuzzy Box/US/CD

Em:t 0003 unleashes ambiance; or, rather, gently sets it adrift. The tracks go through the exercises of non-exercise we know by heart by now, yet occasionally manage to hit that sweet subtle flex we've been craving. Andy Hughes' (ex-Orb) track barely stirs as it pulses lightly angelic. There are songs that are still, and there are songs that are small. And then there are songs that are just wee. Casiphiles rejoice: Fuzzy Boombox plays like a quirky electro pop ballet of miniatures. Stars as Eyes' "When Things Go Wrong," one of the lush tracks on the comp, is propelled by a kicky sweetness that's enriched by almost soulful piano chords. *Selena Hou*



EROTIC MOMENTS IN HOUSE VOL. 3

Dessous/GER/CD

NORDIC TRAX PRESENTS MANY SHADES OF HOUSE

Nordic Trax/CAN/CD

The two-disc *Erotic Moments*, packed with house tending toward the deeper end, has definite moments, like the dreamy "I Can Forget..." from Innocent Lovers (a.k.a. Marc Puchta) and Vincenzo's excellent "Nightbirds." On the Nordic Trax disc, label founder Luke McKeenan's smooth mixing is the biggest highlight, with fun tracks like Demarkus Lewis's kinetic "Come On (Bop)" and the groovy "Sincerement" by I:Shead. Solid house albums though these may be, both are erroneously titled. Erotic? Not so much. Many shades? Missing at least a few flavors. *Luciana Lopez*

FRENCH VANILLA

RED ALERT!

Greensleeves/UK/CD

Greensleeves' streak of fantastically creative rhythm albums continues with *French Vanilla* and *Red Alert!*. South Rakkas Crew's *Red Alert!* rhythm features a spring-loaded bounce, rave whistles and ascending synthesizer lines stolen straight from Orbital's laboratory. T.O.K. adds whirligig organs to create anthemic sing-a-long "Let it Shine," while Predator turns the rhythm darker with the computerized menace of "Mad Sick." *French Vanilla* is just as bright and upbeat, with acoustic guitars winding around backward drums and flutes. Wayne Marshall and Bling Dawg turn the rhythm into a double-time rhyme race, while Elephant Man and Assassin both opt for uncut hype. *Rob Geary*

FUTURISM AIN'T SHIT TO ME

Kitty Yo/GER/CD

Named after the Gonzales-penned jam "Futuristic Ain't Shit to Me," Kitty Yo's most recent compilation doesn't so much refute the Italian Avant-Garde movement it references as coin a phrase that just sounds fly. And why get lofty, when you can bounce to this? You get blunted glitch-hop in the form of Dabrye, tech-madness with Gold Chains & Sue Hie, and all manner of insanity with Shadow Huntaz, Aesop Rock, AGF, White Hole and a heap more. Funny thing is, it all sounds pretty, um, futuristic. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

ILLUMINATION: VOL. 12

Tresor/GER/CD

Pure techno is about timbres and tones. It sidesteps melody, thriving on production and sound processing. Techno-junkies hanker for mechanical repetition that induces four-to-the-floor hypnosis. You either love it or hate it. Berlin's Tresor label perseveres into this heady chaos with a diverse, unmixed compilation that coincides with their nightclub's thirteenth anniversary. The sampler gently commences with minimal ditties from Todd Bodine and Stewart Walker, followed by a synth-washy Savvas Ysatis number and loopyness from Pacou. From there, tracks from The Advent, Joey Beltram, James Ruskin, Dave Tarrida, Regis and others pound vigorously, digging deeply into the inner-depths of your skull. *Sean O'Neal*

LUNCH MONEY SINGLES VOL. 1

Bully/CAN/CD

What started as a series of hand silk-screened 7-inches by sensitive Canadian hip-hop producers and their friends has now become the Lunch Money Singles series. Anticon affiliates Moodswing9 and Controller 7 make rare solo appearances with their poetic and understated instrumental work. DJ



THE CHANNEL ONE STORY

THE CHANNEL ONE STORY VP/US/CD

If college kids spent less time listening to Sublime and more time listening to the catalog of legendary reggae label Channel One, they would be a lot smarter. They would know what to do with bags of Mexican shake thanks to Frankie Jones' "Don't Smoke The Seed." The Meditations would teach them about the complexities of male/female relationships on "Woman Is Like A Shadow." And they would learn about the dangers of doing too much blow thanks to Dillinger's rambling shaky drug rant "Cokane In My Brain." *The Channel One Story* presents the late '70s/early '80s essentials from one of Jamaica's most prominent production houses in a collection that's as appropriate for the rookie reggae fanatic as it is for the rockers rhythm completist. Listen dis! *Vivian Hoel*

Signify shows you his dark side with "Buk Out" and Sixtoo takes on Simahlak in the sampling one-upmanship that is "Side A Through D." Pieces that jump out from this downbeat collection include Moodswing 9's baroque-meets-jazz "Reflection of Progress" and the plaintive "Watchedusslowlydie," from Sixtoo and Matth's collabo He Did Glass Music. This series provides a glimpse into this group's upcoming producers' bedroom battles and side projects. Collect them all! *DJ Anna*

OUTBREAK PRESENTS BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

Outbreak/US/CD

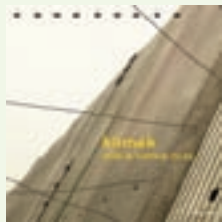
With the steady rise of soulful drum & bass labels like Defunked, Hospital and Liquid V, the dark and dominating sounds of mid-to-late-'90s techstep may soon be a vague memory. But Outbreak's first mix CD, *Biological Warfare*, reminds us of all the angst and power that the harder spectrum has to offer. Standouts tracks derive from newcomers Resonant Evil (who also mix the CD), as well as established clientele like Dylan, Loxy, Ink, Tech Itch and Cause 4 Concern. You've been warned. *Ryan Romana*

THE OURNATIONAL SOUND: THIEVERY

COPORATION

ESL/US/CD

Thievery Corporation is slicker than KY jelly, and it shows not only in their sultry production, but also in their ultra chic DJ sets. The *Ournational Sound* is yet another showcase of the D.C. duo's diverse but cohesive musical palette. Sure, you'll find signature lounge-infused beatscapes by them and labelmates Thunderball and Karminsky Experience. However, they also gyrate waists with funk-driven selections from Breakestra and Beatfanatic, while continuing to preach worldly influences (Indian Vibes' "Mathar") and dub it out with Delroy Wilson. *Ryan Romana*





KOOL ROCK STEADY & SCREAMIN' RACHAEL CAIN

TRAX RECORDS: THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION TRAX RECORDS: THE NEXT GENERATION *Trax/US/CD*

Like so many seminal Midwestern house and techno imprints, Chicago's Trax has lacked the hype that a well-oiled press machine can create. In fact, it's been easy to forget just how important Trax has been to the movement, releasing crucial cuts such as Marshall Jefferson's "Move Your Body," Adonis' "No Way Back" and Kool Rock Steady's "I'll Make You Dance." With a pending acid house revival, the timing is perfect for Trax's *20th Anniversary Collection*. The three-CD set documents house's dirty, bleep-happy underground heyday in the late 1980s with 34 essential tracks mixed by Maurice Joshua and Paul Johnson, and an extra CD of the same tracks unmixed. I dare say Trax's current releases—as compiled on *The Next Generation*—are not quite as compelling, but they still show a deft hand with sassy deep house, serving up a healthy selection of vocal cuts, Latin timbres and thumping gospel jams from Lidell Townsell, Screamin' Rachael and Gene Hunt. *Tyra Bangs*



PARTYKELLER VOL. 1 *Compost/GER/CD*

Based on Florian Keller's Munich club night, this comp is not unlike an *Another Late Night* or *Back To Mine* selection, with its mined grooves over drunken pulls. The selections are much more impressive than the sequencing, but that's irrelevant as you may never get past the first track; Althea & Donna's "Uptown Top Rankin" is so catchy you'll constantly reel-up the digital rewind. Listen on to find gems like "Tears" (Moroder's source for DJ Shadow's "Organ Donor") and New-Wave Band's "Three People"; maybe the hottest Detroit new wave/electro cut of all time. *Daniel Siwek*

PUBLIC WORKS *Dumb Unit/GER/CD*

Toronto's Jeremy P. Caufield is the buzz amongst the techno uber-mensch of Cologne and Berlin, and if you listen to some of the releases on his Dumb Unit label, you'll see why. But his DJ mix just doesn't work it. *Public Works* serves best as a showcase of its tracks, which is fine, considering it's a label retrospective. But the tracks begin to blah quickly, and border close to trancey tech-house in some parts. Which brings us to the second note: don't put out mix CDs as extended advertisements for your label, unless you're going to take some risks with the mixes, or you're Michael Mayer. *J. David Marston*

REBELFUTURISM *Crosstownrebels/UK/CD*

Damian Lazarus' mix album is consistently tight, and it's also a little bitchy—a curt and hot hybrid creature of electro, house and techno with a knockout ass that's looking to score. Just not with you, unless you're rightly cocksure and flick your hair just so. Lazarus gets things going right with "Shake," a shimmying banger that sings to "shake yer shame off," before moving swiftly to Le Dust Sucker's sparsely tribal "Mandate My Ass." Oh hell yes. *Selena Hou*

ROOTS OF DUB FUNK 2: THE DUB PRESSURE ROOTS OF DUB FUNK 3: THE DUB ADVENTURE *Tanty/UK/CD*

Roots of Dub Funk is what happens when you get mad ragga junglists to chill the fuck out and omit errant breaks in favor of a tidal wave of grooves. All ragga tracks have them: those classic cadences and codas that rock steady, only to give way to Congo Natty-ish histrionics. Well, this international cast of producers offers up a "What if we didn't go there?" scenario. Not forsaking technology and sample culture, the Interruptor recreates vintage dub sirens and timed-out delays with a VST, Dub Farm gives us the ubiquitous "Babylon shall fall" line from Rockers, while Faya Dub's languorous violin over the "Apache" drum loop turns breakdancers into spliffed-out Lazy-B-Boys. *Daniel Siwek*

SWITCHES *Audiobulb/UK/CD*

If you made a daisy chain out of the bedroom producers currently making Plaid- and Boards of Canada-influenced IDM, it would stretch around the earth 12 times. Switches curates 14 such unsung heroes into a quiet exhibition that will perfectly suit fans of tonal sculpture and melancholic clicks 'n' cuts. Switches doesn't quite equal the genius of, say, Aphex Twin's *Selected Ambient Works Part 2*, but among picaresque tracks from New York's Build, Wisconsin's He Can Jog and London's OTI, there may be a future star in the making. *Tyra Bangs*

THEY KEEP ME SMILING *United Acoustic/US/CD*

If you don't already have a cantilever of pharmaceuticals holding the corners of your mouth up, the Hisham "recently turned ex-Black Dice" Baroocha-curated *They Keep Me Smiling* will work as both personal and universal epistle. In association with New York fashion house United Bamboo, *TKMS* focuses on the new psychedelic folk/noise underground of New York. And from the sun-specked folksong of Samara Lubelski to the acid-Kraut ramblings of Gang Gang Dance and the pagan-noise workouts of Angelblood, wonderful yarns are spun, with a gorgeous booklet to boot. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

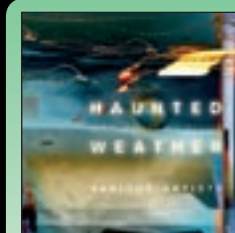
YE OLDE BARN *Addict/US/LP*

Full disclosure: this reviewer is originally from Wisconsin, and there is no f**cking way he's fair, because he loves Dan Doormouse, and Addict is Doormouse's label. Intelligent folks who grow up in the decaying Great Lakes rust belts are punk rock before they ever hear Fugazi and experimental way before they've seen their first Stan Brakhage film. They beautifully translate this unhinged wrath into luminous and humorous experimental noise, called breakcore, and it couldn't be more finely represented than it is here on *Ye Olde Barn*. You suckers can buy your way a little bit closer to the exotic Wisconsin species by picking up this ass-kicking compilation. *J. David Marston*



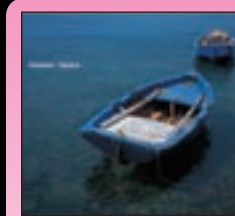
Various GRIME CD / 3LP

Grime, sublow, dubstep... it's music, fresh new music. Rephlex showcase 3 hot new artists from this burgeoning scene, **Plasticman**, **Markone** and **Slaughter Mob**, four tracks each, 12 new ways of looking at dance music.



DAVID TOOP HAUNTED WEATHER 2CD

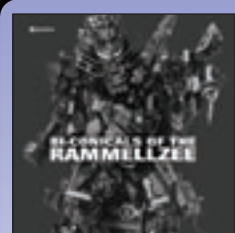
Compiled by David Toop. 2cd, 33 tracks, feat. **Matmos**, **Autechre**, **Fennesz**, **Pan Sonic**, **Oval**, **Nicolai/Sakamoto**, **Ryoji Ikeda** and many more.



FENNESZ VENICE CD

Guitarist and electronic musician Christian Fennesz returns with *Venice*, his first studio album in three years. He does with sound what Brakhage did with film, altering its very fabric and texture, resulting in a gloriously transcendent event that abounds with magical moments.

TOUCH



RAMMELLZEE The Bi-Conicals Of The Rammelzee CD / 2LP

The debut album from our fave NYC Street art superhero. SciFi ElectroHop Madness! "Absolutely amazing!" (Trevor Jackson), "Fucking great!" (Andrew Weatherhall), "One of the most remarkable Hip Hop documents of the past three decades!" (The Wire).



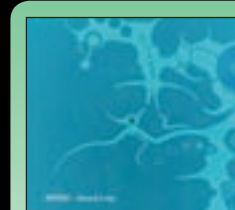
RESIDENTS WB:RMX CD / LP

The Residents themselves remixed their first album from 1971, the never ever before released Warner Bros. Album.



COBRA KILLER 76/77 CD / LP

The hottest act in Berlin extend their healing power into your living room, and its a long way from digital hardcore to pop! A rock/electronic mix drenched in subversive, funny lyrics undercut by sharp breaks. The two girls sampled, programmed and screamed, and here we have their masterpiece.



BIOSPHERE Autour de la Lune CD

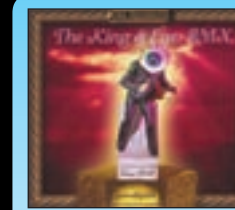
Widely regarded as one of Norwegian electronic music's most important artists, this new release is set to compete with Brian Eno's 'Apollo' recordings as the definitive homage to the space age.

TOUCH



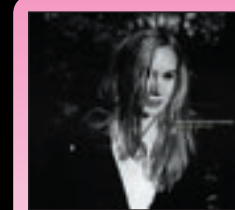
Rhythym King & Her Friends I AM DISCO CD / LP

Queer electronica, marvelous edge pop melodies, sampled rhythms and a playful use of different instruments, compliment lyrics embodied in the field of gender politics and an attitude with atmosphere reminiscent of Lilliput, The Slits, Le Tigre and Luscious Jackson.



RESIDENTS KING & EYE RMX CD / LP

The classic 1989 Residents album "The King & Eye" remixed by European remix whiz Paralyzer.



SUSANNA AND THE MAGICAL ORCHESTRA List of Lights and Buoys CD

Debut album from this atmospheric Norwegian duo offers a stunning understated mix of pop, jazz, laptop and minimal electronica that oozes sensuality.

rune grammofon

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FORCED EXPOSURE



ARVE HENRIKSEN Chiaroscuro CD

Stunning follow-up from this fantastic Norwegian trumpet player and founding member of Supersilent, joined by percussionist Audun Kleive and electronic sound artist Jan Bang to create beautifully haunting soundscapes.

rune grammofon



Various Difficult Easy Listening CD / 2LP

Dedicated to the deliberately mad and condescendingly superior! This wild mixture of exotic tunes by bands and programmers belongs to the parallel universe. Entirely exclusive. (Nonplace)



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**HOUSE GUEST
REVIEWS:
ROB PAINE**

Banish the thought from your head that all reggae/dub DJs-turned-house producers from Philly are too stoned to get anything done, too relaxed to finish more than one single every five years. Worship Records don Rob Paine is proof to the contrary: When he's not collaborating with tech-house scion Hipp-e or releasing new tracks on SF's Jah Love or Philly's Dae, Paine is running two monthly club nights in his hometown or DJing on the road; witness his recent return to Nor-Cal's huge summer reggae/world music event, Sierra Nevada. This activity magnet has reggae and downbeat labels in the works while maintaining Worship's weekly clubs, Heavy (every Tuesday since 1994 at Soma) and Solomonic Fridays (at Filo's). Paine took a deep inhale and jotted down his latest fave tracks. *Derek Grey* www.worshiprecs.com

MARK FARINA DREAM MACHINE Om/US/12

Any record suitable for a downtempo and house set is always a joy to my record bag. Mark's original downtempo mix is as smooth as his mixing. The vocalist is striking, similar to Nina Simone. J Boogie's mix hits the mid-tempo spectrum with tambourines for everyone. But the real jewel is JT Donaldson's mix. Moving vocal house music at its best! *RP*

HIPP-E STOMPIN EP Tango/US/12

Busting out on the solo tip for this one, Hipp-e takes it deep and techy. "Like This" is the deeper of the two with melodic sharp stabs and sweeps galore. My pick off the EP is the title track, "Stompin." This tune can test both the intimate and big room crowds with oscillating stabs, bass slaps and running rhythms. House thumpin fi sure! *RP*

DUB THEORY MEETS DJ NATHAN JAH CALLING Care/US/12

Onward dub house soldiers—big up yourselves! Some quality tunes from these two Bay Area producers. Side A and B1 are similar in vibes, both sharing a heavy sub-bass line and nice keyboard percussion. Usually I'm not feeling the synthetic percussion but it works here. B1 has a chunkier rhythm, while B2 goes so dub that only a dread can test it...bless. *RP*



Rob Paine of Worship gives thanks for his mom's life.

**JAY TRIPWIRE
SOMETHING MORE THAN WIND & DRUMS
Dorigen/UK/12**

Vancouver, Canada's Jay Tripwire (previous singles on Grayhound, Big Chief, Nightshift) is the sound of *right now*. His jacked kicks 'n' snares, acid synths, popping electro basslines, tweaky samples and raw arrangements spin like a blurry disco ball after five pints. The three-song "Something More" EP is proof; if you need more, check his fucking unhinged mixes of H-Foundation's "So Fine" (Soma)—gut-quivering sexy. *Tomas*

**BRAD PETERSON
EXCERPTS FROM A DEEP SOUL'S DIARY
Moods And Grooves/US/12**

Mike Grant's label is on a roll lately and this classy, atmospheric single (think Mr. Fingers) keeps it moving like a Lexus down LA's Crenshaw Blvd. In fact, while I'm cruising, (deep soul) Garth Trinidad's Chocolate City radio show is playing smooth music like this from the African diaspora. Another recent M&G gem is Andre Lodemann's "Flying"—a compressed diamond refracting a rainbow of melodic microbeams. Bling bling. *Lonnice Forester*

**JT DONALDSON THE FUNK IS ON YOUR SIDE
Grab/US/12**

If you love perfect, simmering, jazz-tinted house with big bass drops—holla at JT. Son is always throwing in a live horn here, a spacey keyboard there—we know the funk is on his side; kid probably eats Fatback for breakfast. His "Spread The Groove" with

CPEN (on Late Night Essentials) pits hot barbeque B3 organs over hands-in-the-air bass drum thumps. Rejoice. *Lonnice Forester*

**DEMARKUS LEWIS PARALLELS
Nordic Trax/CAN/12**

Dallas's Lewis—a shooting star across the music universe's dark skies—hooks up metronomic but swinging soul rhythms with an array of vintage keys and robust bass notes—like Philly disco legends MF5B filtered by France's Julianne Jabre. "Parallels" and "Come On (Bop)" are for sweaty nights in Soho basements, while his other recent single, "The Hustler," on Chicago's Vista suits the city's gritty Southside dance dens. *Tomas*

**CLUB DUB BRING IT UP
Limestone/US/12**

Take a live funk band—bass, sax, tambourines, a vocalist who sounds like vintage Rufus Thomas—add an echoing, SF-meets-Denver 4/4 groove, and you've got Club Dub; party music that sounds like it was fun to make. 'Course I expect that from the newly formed Limestone, whose debut by Deep House Soldiers saw deep house parlay with broken beat. A US label to watch. *Derek Grey*

**FRANKIE FALSE START
Frankie Rec/FRA/12**

Weird records—I love 'em. And Frankie's a fuckin' freak—he's wrong, twisted; a moron with a primitive sampler bashing out slithering house-tech disasters. He's looping shit backwards, sampling answerphones,

Casios and himself. Dumb ass is a genius. Similarly, somebody passed Sacramento's Steve Spacek a sherm stick (I told you it wasn't a blunt!) before he made "Good Times" (Upright Recordings)—bargain bin house that'll be a collector's item in 2025. *Tomas*

**THOMAS SAHS LITTLE DEE
Dae/US/12**

Austin-based Sahs owes his loopy soul to Stevie Wonder's keyboard—at least his thoroughly bumpin' "Little Dee" sounds blessed by a similarly masterful funk. Meanwhile, Texan Spettro, Chicago's No Assembly Required and Paul Paredes do their remash work, with NAR's elephantine hoofs stomping out a primal thump. The Bay Area's Julius Papp (Loveslap, Large) was on Dae 002—his "Electrofied" EP is glossy but one of his better recent singles. *Derek Grey*

**J-ROD FEAT ADINA WELCH
ADVENTURES IN MASS TRANSIT
Flat & Round/UK/12**

Manchester's Ben Davis's imprint (home to tracks by Demarkus Lewis, Chris Lum etc.) has an animated new single from Chicago's J-Rod. Sounding like a German electro producer doing slowed-down UK garage, "Work" is still jackin' enough to please the Windy City. You'll bounce like them Nike Shocks. *Hector Cedillo*

BREAKS GUEST REVIEWS: WILL SAUL



New school breaks is a genre rarely described as subtle, except when it comes to London's Will Saul. As proprietor of Simple Records, Saul absorbs influences from downtempo, dub, glitchy house and electro into the fold, then churns out deep, crisp breaks numbers that smoothly sprawl out. When Saul's not holding down his monthly DJ residency with Rennie Pilgrim and Meat Katie at London's Hum, he's gearing up for releases on 10 Kilo and Marine Parade, as well as taking care of forthcoming Simple tracks from Sideshow, Walkner.Hintenaus, and Precision Cuts. Here's a simple list of what's made it into Saul's record case this month. *Vivian Hoat*

www.simplerecords.co.uk

POONISHER BASE 1/GONNA KEEP RIDE Mantra/ITA/12

I'm all about building a groove in my DJ sets and "Base 1" is an ideal tool for this. The arrangement develops gradually, around the focal point of a really bouncy analog bassline. This will appeal to those who like their breaks with an electro-house twist. *WS*

CANE MATTO AIN'T NUTTIN TO IT One Eye/UK/12

Another superb release from Pressure Drop's One Eye imprint. The label owners team up with DJ Rocca from Italy's infamous Maffia Soundsystem and deliver a broken beat future classic where funky fractured beats entwine with reversed keyboard chords, all pinned down with a rolling sub-bassline. Fans of Bugz In The Attic will love this. *WS*

EVIL 9 RESTLESS Marine Parade/UK/12

The Evils are my favorite producers on the scene at the moment and this single is the first taster from their brilliant forthcoming debut album, *You Can Be Special Too*. "Restless" effortlessly fuses hip-hop and breaks with a blistering assault of searing guitar thrown in for good measure. A guaranteed floor-shaker. *WS*

ARTIFACT FROM RUSSIA WITH DUBZ EP Solo/UK/12

For months, Matt "Jam" Lamont teased listeners with snippets of this EP. Now available on Lamont's Solo imprint, Artifact delivers a level of musicality drawing instant (and well-deserved) comparisons to MJ Cole. From the slick Rhodes of "Bad (So Good)" to the deeper sounds on "Believe Me," this is a 4/4 bombshell. The cold war is over. *DeepSix*

CIRCUIT BREAKER PHONQUE Vertical Sound/UK/12

Berlin's Circuit Breaker puts punk attitude and electro touches to a breaks framework on "Phonque," where nasty leads duel with classic techno sounds (love that percolator noise!); flip for a minimal, bass-driven remix from Bristol's October. Also check Circuit's Headbangers Ball mix of Bengston's "Jump" (on Swiss label Ritmic), which turns a paint-by-the-numbers breaks bit into a raver's anthem that mixes influences from Run DMC to Metallica. *Star Eyes*

DBX GOOD LOVE AWOL/UK/12

DBX's "Good Love" is a 4/4 vocal workout with a heavy bassline; the flip, "Rapture," adds familiar ragga chants to the "Champ" loop to create one floor-smashing choon. Also on AWOL, Carlito's "Saturday" is a surefire pleaser with a lyrical hook and solid drum programming; its B-side, "Ghetto Dance,"

does 4/4 in a break-wise style with serious low-end action. *DeepSix*

THE EQ PROJECT I WONDER Qualifide/UK/12

The Qualifide label has built a reputation for pushing the 4/4 vibe, and the legacy continues with the cut-up brilliance of El-B and Qualifide's "I Wonder" and the shiny happy "Get Into." Add in a quirky dubwise Ghost remix and you're looking at 100% pure goodness on vinyl. Rinse on sight. *DeepSix*

J.D.S VS. MIHELL PURPLE FUNKY MONKEY TCR/UK/12

Taking bassline cues from UK grime and rhythm tics from Chicago house, this track is a dancefloor attention grabber with a dramatic electro breakdown, peak-time breaks, vague rock influences and sawing synths. Flip for "Daylight," a shiny hyperbolic nu-skool number reminiscent of Underworld and Josh Wink. *Star Eyes*

STANTON WARRIORS SLANTY 679/UK/12

The hits here are "Slanty" and "Jiggle Dat," glistening vocal breaks numbers featuring sinuous chatting from dancehall star Ce'cile; the production could be dirtier, but these still deliver hot club action. Limp neo-soul number "When I Wake" and the bizarre Kraftwerk-meets-Cameo funk of "Adventures of Success" round things out. *Star Eyes*

HIP-HOP GUEST REVIEWS: TURNTABLE LAB



Turntable Lab NYC Crew

To call six-year-old New York online and retail store Turntable Lab a trendsetter would be incorrect. A DJ trend predictor would be more like it, as they've always carried exactly what serious spinners have been looking for—including 45 adapter domes, needles, vinyl, DVDs and books—before mainstream outlets like Guitar Center latched on. Founded in 1998 as a student project on the art of retail by three former classmates at NYU, the Lab has expanded into a full-blown operation projected to ship a quarter million packages this year. In addition to their online equipment and music store, Turntable Lab runs a Manhattan storefront, the Money Studies record label, and a clothing label with a new line this summer. And these cats are definitely vinyl junkies. Peter Hahn was kind enough to scratch out a few words about this month's hot joints. *Tomas*

KW GRIFF/NOTORIOUS B.I.G TIME OF MY LIFE Quiet/US/12

With so many Biggie remixes swirling around, this one definitely stands out as the most unique. Griff mega-chops Premier's "Ten Crack Commandments" into one of the year's most memorable and devastating Baltimore club tracks. Double shots, as this single also features an excellent reggae-inspired track featuring early Barrington Levy vocals. Might be hard to track down, but it's worth the search. *PH*

NAS THIEF'S THEME Columbia/US/12

Every time we want to write Nas off (possibly going soft in that Kelis trap?), he comes back with a track that hits us straight in the dirty gut. For "Thief's Theme," Nas again rides an Incredible Bongo Band loop—this time it's "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida." The combo jumps through your veins like a baby grand piano falling down stairs. *PH*

PRINCE PO HOLD DAT Lex/UK/12

Why Richard X's A-side "Mix One" isn't the version to make it onto Po's full-length *The Slickness* is a damn mystery to me. It's the underground's "In Da Club" and, were there justice in this world, it would rival 50 Cent for radio domination. The album mix on the B stands for bunk. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

ED OG & MASTA ACE MAKE SOME NOISE Glow In The Dark/US/12

No marblemouth here. Ed O.G. and the Masta himself burn all the haters around with their Boston/Brooklyn MC summit. Not gonna waste your time describing all four jams and their instrumentals. It just doesn't get this effortless very often. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

MOBB DEEP GOT IT TWISTED Jive/US/12

"Ain't no party once we crash the party/Imma squeeze shorty then vacate the party/ You keep grillin' I'll pump pump the shotty/Put you in the trunk then dump dump the body". Queensbridge's finest talk murder and girls over the most sinister beat this year. And yes, that is "She Blinded Me With Science" being sampled for the loop. Thomas Dolby would be proud. *DJ Anna*

STARVING ARTIST CREW THE KICK CLAP Fatbeats/US/12

Hype-hop that owes its upbeat jazz licks and intricately woven lyricism to early-'90s goldies like Main Source, Three Times Dope and Pharcyde. You can see these guys equally sharing stages with J5 or Slick Rick—now who's as versatile as that these days? *Derek Grey*

DIVERSE JUS BIZ Chocolate Industries/US/12

Prefuse and Madlib are behind the mixing desks for these three hot tracks where MC Diverse spins his tales in double time to the music. "Jus Biz" is a mellow thought piece (explaining his music life to a lover), whereas "Beyond Beyond" (about elevated tactics) is sharp as a dagger tip. *Dave Samuels*

NOT FOR NUTHIN' STORY Embedded/US/12

With echoes of Black Moon, Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn MCs E-dot, Loer Velocity and producer Donnan Linkz unveil a fluid, cruising-in-your-Explorer-type track, with rhyme waterfalls that flow over liquid soul loops. Mr. Complex guests on "Eye Opener," and overall this single's solid '94-ism makes '04 hip-hop sound like cotton candy. *Tomas*



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Camping "Suburban Shore"
A captivating synthesis of Bossa Nova and abstract electronics featuring Chessie.



Daedelus "Of Snowdonia"
"smart, consistent, and fittingly, inventive."
- Pitchfork



Milosh "You Make Me Feel"
Milosh's debut release blends electronic/down-tempo melodies with a touch of soul that guarantees instant and lasting attention.



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**TECHNO LABEL
PROFILE:
DEKATHLON RECORDS**

When Florian Senfter (a.k.a. Splank and Zombie Nation) and Wolfram Gotthardt (nickname: Wulfi) started their techno label in spring 2002, they were drawn to the idea of the Olympic decathlon. "We liked the concept that the best one of all disciplines wins in the end, not the one who has specialized in just one of them," says Gotthardt. Initially an outlet for Zombie Nation's tracks, Munich-based Dekathlon soon became an outpost for all stripes of electro sleaze and dirty techno, releasing records from Generation Aldi, My Robot Friend and potty-mouth Gater. The best of Dekathlon can be found on their *Sportler of the Year* compilation, and the crew has got new 12"s and EPs forthcoming this fall from minimal groovers Duniz & Henrixx and synth monster Zombie Nation. But perhaps Dekathlon's most exciting band is Montreal electro hip-hop outfit Nam:Live, whose identities remain a mystery, even to Gotthardt. "I've been communicating for more than one year with a guy called Denis [from Nam:Live] and I suspect he's also the producer and singer," muses Wulfi. "But he insists he is just the negotiator or manager. Meanwhile, it is like a sport for me to get in contact with anyone from the band, [we haven't had any] success so far." No worries—Dekathlon are experts at playing the game. *Vivian Hoat*
www.dekathlon-records.com



Wolfram Gotthardt (left) and Florian Senfter a.k.a. DJ Splank

SHAWN RUDIMAN ODDS AGAINST US
Technoir/US/12

Salvation for the techno soul arrives via Pittsburgh-native Rudiman's succulent strings. Driving chords rest upon shimmering pads on this percussive monster, complemented by an industrial-minded electro-tech edge. Dark, funky and energetic, this peak-aimed dancefloor jam thrives upon wistful tension. *Praxis*

APOLL QUADROPHOBIA EP
Punkt/GER/12

Swiss cheese André Pollman puts forth bouncy minimal techno with tongue firmly in cheek. Robots joke and jest on the subtle but slamming "Monoplay," the loping, personality-filled "Stereogame," and the squelching "Two Rings Out," which can expect support from Hawtin and company. Also on Punkt, P. Lauer's "Free Entrée For Girls EP" serves up Detroit-related pulse-bangers with oblique electro and disco punk references. *Mr. Thang*

**SOMEONE ELSE + MISTAKE
RIP IT COOKIE MUENSTER EP**
Foundsound/US/12

Foundsound's debut contains three original numbers by Someone Else and Mistake, plus a wonderfully fun remix by Matthew Dear. Deep, pumping basslines emerge from processed, rice crispy crackling sound files, fusing the quirky and bizarre with a pop sensibility. *Forset Green*

CARI LEKEBUSCH TYRANT
Kaun Trax/SWE/12

More popular than a Swedish meatball, this top affiliate unleashes an al dente cut from his recently founded new-wave techno imprint. FM synth madness visits us once again, this time behind the reins of a deep yet sultry club-styled drum track. Sweeping noise washes add a proper quantity of excitement to the reclusive breakdown. *Praxis*

JAMIE BISSMIRE UNTITLED
50Hz/UK/12

From the assembly line of Space DJz, Bandulu and Ground Recordings, Jamie Bissmire ignites the fog machine whilst dropping heavy-hitting warehouse techno. Pounding polyrhythmic melodies saturate in vats of raunchy reverb and phase-shifted delays, as the vigorous lead synth embraces unadulterated dancefloor euphoria. Only serious technoists need apply. *Praxis*

ALEX UNDER GRIS OVEJA
CMYK Musik/SPA/12

Fresh out of Madrid, Alex Under brings on minimal techno love with his second release on CMYK Musik. In a beautiful demonstration of good taste, he matches Berlin and Detroit sounds, introducing funk-filled grooves and delicate rhythms for dancers who are light on their feet. For more of the same, Geoff White's first release on fellow Spanish label Apnea, "Ique," is a must. *Forset Green*

TODD BODINE TRAFFIC CONTROL EP
Morris Audio/GER/12

Todd Bodine presents a funky, minimal four-tracker combining a microhouse feel with razor-sharp rhythms. "For Nothing" is crunchy, lo-fi house; "Everything Goes" is a Detroit-style track that trades in strong rhythms set and alluring melodic textures; "Let It Roll"'s electro-flavored house has a naughty swing; and "Radarstreams" bumps along in a Detroit Grand Pubahs manner with fat basslines and funky grooves. Versatile. *Forset Green*

DJ OMEGA GO FOR WHAT YOU KNOW
Databass/US/12

Get yo' jit on with more hot from Godfather's Databass label. "Go For What You Know" is a warmer ghetto tech number, with bass that bumps up and down the scale and lyrics designed to give hoes good self-esteem. Flip for sexier house-tempo numbers with that Detroit dirty edge. Also check DJ PJ's "Da Ghetto Bangdown," a four-tracker of quality, Funk/Deeon-styled ghetto house. Time to retire your copy of Assault's "Ass 'N' Titties" now. *Star Eyes*

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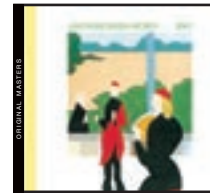
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LEFTFIELD GUEST REVIEWS: STATE OF BENGAL



In the freewheelin' '90s, British electronic music was merging and converging at every turn, from sped-up ragga breakbeats forming jungle to ambient hip-hop becoming trip-hop to myriad Indo-Pakistani-Bangladeshi-Arabic sounds fusing with the latest technology under the banner of the Asian Underground. Led by Talvin Singh, Nitin Sawhney and our guest here, Saifullah "Sam" Zaman (a.k.a. State of Bengal), the movement was a post-modern blend of ancient South Asian instrumentation with digital-era samples and beats. No stranger to experimentation, Zaman's two-year recording effort with singer/instrumentalist Paban Das Baul, a traditional Bengali Baul (wandering Sufi singers and musicians) recently culminated in the album *Tana Tani* (Real World). In his distinctive East London drawl, Zaman reviews three singles currently in his box. *Derek Gray* www.stateofbengal.com, www.realworld.com

REBEL UPRISING MILLION IN ONE Betelnut/UK/12

This piece of real life is delivered by Deedermama (front man of Asian Dub Foundation), wiv' the MC energy that we've been used to from the original ADF sound. Rebel Uprising rears its ugly head in relation to the wars that control the human system. Will be released on the next State of Bengal album, *Truth Time*, as well as the forthcoming Rebel Uprising album. Check www.betelnutrecords.com for the release schedules. *SZ*

MARQUE GILMORE G'S DREAD Betelnut/UK/12

A strange track that's not yet released; it's on the [BBC] Radio 1 playlist [yet] still maintains an underground feel. Recorded across three years, most of the sounds [are produced by] Gilmore's mouth, nose and other parts of the body as well as the infamous Arif Durvesh on tablas and vocal drone. Technically a dance track, but wiv' serious performances by both musicians. *SZ*

RHYTHM KING & HER FRIENDS GET PAID Kitty Yo/GER/12

For all the kids with dead end jobs and a taste for beatbox rhythms, "Get Paid" may be the electro pocket-pop anthem of the summer. Buffalo Daughter spins it into sugar and Ladytron turns day into night. Also on KY: Sex in Dallas thinks Berlin rules and that we all deserve a good fuck. No disagreement here. A brilliant remix from French Fragz is the jam here. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO ECHO IN SPACE DUB Tino Corp/US/12

Jack Dangers' dub gets touched by NY's DJ Wally and Dubloner (a.k.a. 8 Frozen Modules). Guest ragga lyricist DJ Collage assembles his toasts in rapid-fire bursts, complimenting the molasses bass of "Echo" and "Retrograde"'s freaky tones. On a similar tip, G-Corp's MC-driven side-project Overproof Soundsystem (on Different Drummer) makes dub and dancehall for entry-level ears—a welcome mat for those who wish to explore reggae's many mansions. *Derek Gray*

HOW TO KILL THE DJ EXHIBIT [B] Tigersushi/FRA/12

More rare goodies from Ivan Smaghe and crew. Exhibit [B]'s long lost reissue of Australian group Severed Heads' "Dead Eyes Opened" is edited brilliantly by France's Joakim; and

Smaghe and Fany Corral's edit of "Essit Musique" is acid the way it should be. On another TS release, art hipster Sir Alice eschews the club for more aggressive experimentalism, sounding like Gina X fronting Neubaten. Search both these out. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

SHIRKER CONFUSION Flameboy/UK/12

An ode to hedonism not to be, um, confused with New Order's similarly-named '80s hit. Shirker (Nick Strasburg) makes a modern electro club track, declaring "I like to take drugs and go out to dance clubs." The song's got a strong buzz, but the effect wears off the next day. Still memorable, though, are Flameboy's dynamic Red Snapper remixes by Radioactive Man, Jake One and Depth Charge—one of these and yer sorted, mate. *Derek Gray*

M. SAYYID OUTSIDE THE BOX Sound Ink/US/12

The first solo release from Anti-Pop Consortium's most overlooked member ain't a drastic departure. Stunted electronic minimalism and cerebral word-play rules here. Heat Sensor drops by for some tasty old-school production, and Sayyid returns the favor on their "Touch" EP, which is wound up tight as an elastic brain about to detonate. In a similar galaxy, Daly Operations (on Future Primitive) steps up with a searing take on electro dancehall in "Fitna Get Paid." *Alexis Georgopoulos*

FUTURE JAZZ LABEL PROFILE: EXCEPTIONAL



Bob Fisher

London's Exceptional realizes that future jazz is a global phenomenon; consequently, the label draws on the talents of producers from every continent. Since forming in 1999, Exceptional has wasted no time, releasing 30 singles and 17 albums from such varied artists as Japan's Calm and Susumu Yokota, Sweden's Plej and Swell Session, and the UK's Blu Mar Ten and Gary Martin. Add a new album to their stack: *Exceptionally Remixed*, a compilation that collects their limited-edition singles and highlights superb rearrangements by Osunlade, Spiritual Soul, Jimpster, Akufen and Bugz In The Attic. Label boss Tash says of the collection: "[It was] important that each of the tracks are presented individually rather than part of a mix. [That] makes it clear to see that each of the remixers has been respectful to the original version while [giving them] their own slant." The future sees music from Latin fiend John Beltran and Ohio hip-hopper Fat Jon, plus a new single "Fitness" from Blu Mar Ten. In fact, Exceptional themselves appear to be in tip-top shape. Olympians look out. *Tomas*

www.exceptionalrecords.co.uk

DJ DEZ NATURAL EP Hipnotech/US/12

Hip-hop connoisseurs should seek these five new instrumentals from Detroit's Dez on his follow-up to the "Mass Destruction" EP. Dez is Slum Village's DJ and son of percussionist Humberto Nentue Hernandez, but if you're expecting rough, rugged 'n' energetic beats, stop right here. These rhythms are polished and laidback with remnants of Chaka Khan and Tribe spliced amidst clean snare hits and lazy loops. Great DJ tool. *Franz Carr*

JUGOE/SPOOKY MONKEY THE DUBBED UP EP Bastard Jazz/US/12

A combo of music that falls between the cracks but seems sure to light many a summer barbeque fire over the next few months. There's ambient dub hop (courtesy of LA's Spooky Monkey) that Dr. Rubberfunk transforms into upbeat hip house. Cleveland's Jugoe drops some progressive reggae à la Brooklyn's Redbud imprint and Apeanaut turns it into the kind of jelly Rick James wants all the damn time. *Alexis Georgopoulos*

RAW DEAL USED TO BE Straight Ahead/SWIT/12

Soaring, soulful vocals and three-part harmonies cascade through Jim "Raw Deal" Robbins's first single from his forthcoming *Snakes And Ladders* album. Zap Mama's Tanya "Nia" Saw sweetly complements Robbins's shuffle-boogie beat that draws on electro-disco instrumentation, cowbells, jazzy guitars and all. Superb. *Tomas*

XANTONE BLACK SEARCH FOR THE SUN Chicooligan/US/12

"Ahhh-la-lie-yahh" is the airy bossa-jazz invocation of Xantone's Roy Ayers-meets-Azymuth song "Search." Remixer John Beltran brings in a veritable "bloco" of percussion for an enjoyably shaken-up rendering. If you like this, find DJ Shimoyama's "Ile Aie" (Nitelist), a Rio-house gem, and Gerardo Frisina's fine "Gica's Dance" (Scheme Italia) to fatten your modern Brazilian DJ bag. *Derek Gray*

CRATE SOUL BROTHERS SWINGING WITH MISS GOODNIGHT Ohm/ITA/12

Good music comes from anywhere, like this broken bossa number featuring production from Hungarian Crate Soul and German-born remixes on an Italian label. Go straight to Augsburg duo Panoptikum's 10-minute future free-jazz adaptation, which sounds like a Coltrane/Herbie Hancock/Dego jam session. Hot! Also on Ohm, This Information's "Galaxy Blues," a Rhodes-drenched broken cut backed with Yannah's off-kilter remix. Spins my world! *Hector Cedillo*

SOUND IN COLOR MUSIC Sound In Color/US/12

Only Ubiquity Records and Titonton's Residual have done more to boost the emerging US broken and future jazz scene than So Cal's Sound In Color. This sampler features mental utem-po grooves from rising star GB, fractured hip-hop from Exile, and a fine Daz-I-Kue treatment of Mainframe & Platonic's "Future's Oldest Story." Dez Einswell sleeve art provides a classic look. Essential. *Tomas*

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DRUM & BASS GUEST REVIEWS: TWISTED INDIVIDUAL

Lee Greenaway (a.k.a. Twisted Individual) often looks like a missing member of Slipknot, but don't let that fool you—he's nearly single-handedly master-minded bringing bouncy jump-up b-lines back to drum & bass. From his 1998 Formation debut, "Wales" through to recent releases on his own Grid, Zombie and Up Yours imprints (look out for the Grid Remix EP, Rob Sparx's "Attack of the Wolfman," and Zen's "Kebab Knife"), Twisted has managed to ascend the ranks, causing loads of copying and controversy along the way. Never shy, this creator of "Bandwagon Blues" and "The F-Word" recently graced us with his top three tracks of the month. *Tyra Bangs*

DJ SS ANGER MANAGEMENT Formation/UK/12

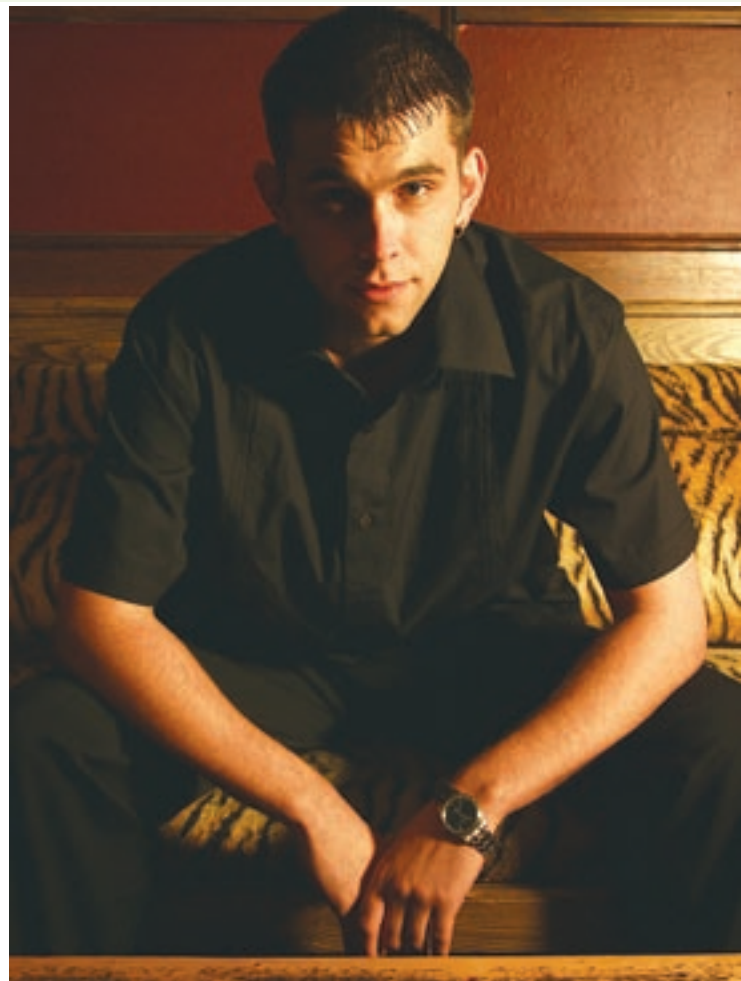
Everyone knows this one, although some people think its called "Aftermath." SS is on an angry one; first "Stress Related" and now this—this man needs some counseling. Tribal intro, bangin' beats and an angry bassline defiantly blow up the dancefloor on this track from the long-awaited *S-Files* LP. I'm just about to start working on the remix of this, so look out for that too. *TI*

BARON FINAL ANSWER Baron Inc./UK/12

This one's the nuts—I wanted this for Grid but the tight arse wouldn't let me 'ave it. Grimier than "The Way It Was," bouncier than "Nosher," it's gonna be bigger than anything Baron's done yet. It makes you nod your head, stomp your feet, laugh and then shit your pants. It starts off with a spooky intro and drops into typical Baron madness before dropping again into some old skool ruff-in-the-jungle bizzness. Massive. *TI*

ZEN REVOLT Formation/UK/12

Smelly bizzness from Kevin Ranks here. Zen's a fussy bastard—he was gonna scrap this tune but I had to tell him "no" and give him a slap. This is a typical Zen tune: heavy two-step beats, crashing snares, and growling bass. Me and SS have been smashin' this everywhere—it's a full-on club stomper that guarantees a rewind. *TI*



AMIT VILLAGE FOLK Commercial Suicide/UK/12

Newcomers Amit and Hungarian Chris SU (and his mysterious Tactile crew) continue to come with the heavy-duty goodness. Amit's "Village Folk" and "Lost Voice" conjure up the ancestors with deep, dark and hypnotic sounds. Spiraling even deeper into the abyss, Chris SU and company bring on the desert vibes with "Paradise" and unleash monstrous lurching basslines on "Undercover Dub." *Chris Muniz*

PERFECT COMBINATION WHAT WILL IT TAKE? Freeform/UK/12

Mancunian Perfect Combination supplies much-needed catchy hooks to drum & bass on "What Will It Take?," pairing creepy chords and chunky beats with full-on female vocals and beautiful horns to create an enticing cut. "The Drop" gets darker with a buzzing bassline and rather generic syncopated cowbells. *Ryan Romana*

BETA 2 MILAN Nu Directions/UK/12

Beta 2 takes a break from collaborations with fellow Irishmen Zero Tolerance and Calibre to flex his solo strengths on Nu Directions. "Milan" builds on choppy, offbeat breaks and warm atmospheric until a surprisingly pounding bassline drops in to move punters from the bar to the dancefloor. The flipside, "Miss U," is rough and sexy as it supplies seductive vocals over low-end rumbling bass. *Ryan Romana*

HOLD TIGHT BLACK MAGIC Trouble on Vinyl/UK/12

Newbies Hold Tight dish out dark tech that doesn't stagnate, thanks to punchy beats and plenty of change-ups. "Black Magic" is a bumpy ride through the makeshift haunted house at the carnival, all squalling synth lines and twisted jump-up bass. "Crack Den" starts off jazzy and horny before nasty smoking leads turn up and gets everyone addicted. *Star Eyes*

BLAME CLOSER 720°/UK/12

Bridging the gap between outer space and the dancefloor, Blame continues to walk the fine line between the tough and the deep on his latest outing for 720°. With "Closer" bringing on the subtle, robot-driven techno-meditation, it isn't until "Citadel" surfaces on the flip that we know exactly what we're dealing with. Twisting up dirty atmospheres, swirling stabs and stuttering beats, this one is nothing short of epic. *Chris Muniz*

BSE & OPTIV INSIDERS BSE/NETH/12

Teaming up with Optiv from C4C, the BSE boys keep the neurofunk vibe alive as the eerie atmospheres and shuffling percussion on "Insiders" gives way to the technoid hook at the core. Skynet, the king of sci-fi funk, touches down on the flip with the quicksilver beatdown of "Hydroflash." Never one to waste any time getting to the heart of the matter, Skynet quickly drives to the breaking point before the bass comes barreling in with inimitable finesse. *Chris Muniz*

PROBE & SYLO GIVE ME SOME MORE WAR/UK/12

Probe and Sylo drop some serious party bounce on their debut for Worldwide Audio Recordings. Featuring the toasting skills of MC IC3, "Give Me Some More" causes dancefloor mayhem with shuffling beats and warped b-lines that beg for the rewind. Wait! There's plenty more jiggle to come as "Shadowlock" keeps the needle in the red and drives another jackhammer groove on home. *Chris Muniz*

MATHEMATICS RUB A DUB Social Studies/US/12

Mathematics ramps up their own Social Studies label with a tidy little drum workout—pitched-down Amens and bongos to be exact—armed with chase scene horns and, duh, dub influences. Roll on as "In & Out" pairs happy synths, flute and sax trills and Krust bass for a retro MJM & Richie/Flytronix-style rinse. Lovely. *Star Eyes*

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THE BLAST ZONE
BY DJ ENKI



THE RANDOM RANTS AND CULTURAL VAMPS OF A HIP-HOP JUNKIE.

Well, it's the end of an era for me. My friend of 15 years and roommate of six years, Chris, has finally finished his PhD and has headed back East to get his post-doctorate degree at Yale and marry his fiancée, the incredibly-tolerant-of-my-shenanigans-and-noise Amanda. This means I am now all alone in the world, a little boy of 28. I spent pretty much all of Memorial Day weekend moving or doing moving-related activities. But really the fun started on Friday night when Chris uttered the fateful words I haven't heard since college: "Let's have a Maddog night!"

And so it came to pass that Chris and I each consumed a tall bottle of Maddog 20/20 fortified wine (strawberry kiwi flavor, a depar-

ture from my traditional preference: orange jubilee). Drinking a tall bottle of MD is no laughing matter: The shit goes down like cough syrup mixed with spoiled milk, only with less of an emphasis on drinkability and taste. The label says it's only 13 percent alcohol, but it sure feels like more than that. Also, this was a huge test of my resolve about quitting smoking, as, in the past, a sip of MD required several drags on a cigarette. (It speaks volumes about MD that chain-smoking actually tastes better than the drink itself.)

Boy did I pay for it, though. Let's just say the "No Me Gusta Flanders" song from that episode of *The Simpsons* where Homer writes the little ditty about how annoying Flanders is figured prominently, as did many malformed personal insults (proving that, though we may be older, and some of us may hold fancy-schmancy degrees, we really haven't evolved much since the age of 14). I think my MD days are well behind me. I'll stick with malt liquor, thanks. *Olde English 800 cuz that's my brand/ Take it in a bottle, 40, quart or can.*

So I spent the rest of the weekend hauling shit around. You know, I've never felt like I have a very big record collection, particularly for a DJ; especially particularly for a DJ who's so fanatical about records. But when I had to haul every single record out of my house and up to my new second-floor apartment, I realized just how many records I have. You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone? No. You don't know what you've got 'til you have to move every single thing from point A to point B in milk crates that turn your hands into prosciutto.

Also, a quick tip for any of you who may be contemplating moves of your own in the future: If you have furniture that you can take apart—say, a futon or a bed frame—then, for the love of god, don't lose all the little screws and grommets and nuts and bolts and wrenches and shit. Furniture ain't furniture if you can't put it back together.

Really, though, furniture is completely secondary to DJ equipment. That's how you can tell you're dealing with an obsessive DJ: "Furniture? Ah, whatever—I can sit on the floor and eat out of Dixie cups if I have to. No biggie. As long as I have a place to set up my turntables."

The other fun part is figuring out the exact noise tolerance of my new neighbors. I'll play as loud as I can get away with, but I won't know what that threshold is until I've pissed off the people above, below, and on either side of me with all the boom-bap and the wikky-wikky scratching. Does anybody else play this game? Just me, huh?

I'm probably the only one who also plays the "Fix grammar in signs around your neighborhood" game, too. (Example: a sign where I used to live said—I shit you not—"50 percent off sail." It was brutal seeing that thing on a regular basis). I think I need help killing off the part of my brain that makes me do these things. And so it is in the spirit of self-improvement that I say, "Pass me the Maddog! No me gusta Flanders!"

Got a hot hip-hop or funk single you want Enki to mention? Send it c/o the *XLR8R* address or drop a line to: pddbabb@hotmail.com



LUCKY 13
BY TOPH ONE

So, like some sweat-drenched William Blake, I battled the hills and asphalt on my trusty black Marin citybike, visions of a better tomorrow swirling around my head like so many gnats, tsetse flies and buzzards. "Wouldn't it be nice to have a girlfriend again?" I thought, possibly out loud, to no one in particular, "A trumpy disco chick with blue eyeshadow and torn fishnets to wink at me from the bar as I mixed ZZ Top into 'Tour De France'?" Remarkably, there's not much of a demand for an over-30 wino Giants fan with a houseful of vinyl and an arrest record spanning three decades, but a delirious bikerat can dream, can't he?

It's June, and for this trip to LA I've joined the AIDS Lifecycle 3, a Herculean fundraising effort with thousands of riders and volunteers covering the distance from San Francisco to Los Angeles over seven days on the road and under the stars. A near-suicidal undertaking for one who enjoys the passions of life as robustly as your writer, but suddenly there I was, lean and trim and very nearly sober, hauling ass over the Golden Gate Bridge for another 50-mile afternoon around Tiburon and back down Ocean Beach to my little cottage in the sand.

It confuses me still, having my reality so spun around by this two-wheeled contraption, but I was, for a time there in May and June, transformed. Maybe this is the new me. Maybe I really will end up re-stocking rice milk and Dr. Bronner's soap at the Food Bin in Santa Cruz or racing bikes around the highways of rural Indiana like a true Cutter. Life may be insane, but it very rarely ever gets boring.

1) CAIT LA DEE "NAUGHTY BOY (FEAT. MR. RICO)" (L4L Music/US/12) Holy shit. It's Mystic hugs Björk and then makes out with Timbaland! This is the JOINT! Props to Alf Diggy on production, for pushing that envelope.

2) CARLOS MENA "HIP-HOP MEDITATIONS" (self/US/CD) Tired of the glitz and the glam and all the crap rappers? Check out this unsung Bay Area savior, who makes beautiful music for the conscious heads. "Walking in the Light" could be one of the hottest songs of the year and needs to be released on 12".

3) P.E.A.C.E "MEGABITE" (BATTLEAXE/CAN/2xLP)/HAIKU D'ETAT "HAIKU D'ETAT" (Ocean Floor/US/CD) Next level epiphanies from the Freestyle Fellowship camp. Straight-up genius.

4) VINTNOR VALETH "FUNKY SOCIAL LIGHT" B/W RUEBEN SLADE "THE IRON HORSE" (Tonedef/US/7) Two serious sides of deep Midwest basement funk, saved from obscurity by the vigilantes at Firebrand.

5) DJ NU-MARK "HANDS ON" (Sequence/US/CD & 12) Flawless, with something for everyone. This could be the mix of the summer, right here. Peep the 12" featuring Chali 2Na and L-Live. Whoop!

6) INSPECTOR DOUBLENEGATIVE "MODERNHOP-INDIGINOISE" (self/US/CD) Another chapter in the prolific saga of Oaklandish agent provocateurs B.A.A.C./Nameless & Faceless/ AS Crew. Find it on the Ave. or out of their trunk, but DO track these cats down.

7) CPEN "AUDIO FOOL" (FEAT. JAMES TORME) (Icon/US/12)/ MUDD "ADVENTURES IN BRICKET WOOD" (Rong/US/12) Mutant space-funk with elements of electro, broken beat, and classic early '90s house. You know when a song inspires you to create the perfect situation to play it in? That's called inspiration and it's a rare and gorgeous thing. Grab it and hold onto it and squeeze it really hard.

8) DJ SPINNA "COMPOSITIONS2" (Female Fun/US/12) Come now—everything this guy does is golden. And I'm beginning to think the same about the Female Fun label. Spinna, MF Doom and have you picked up that Chris Lowe yet? Banging!

9) MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO "RETROGRADE WE R 1" (Tino Corp/US/12) Another round of low-end damage from Jack Dangers and crew, this one featuring my man Collage on the mic, clocking in like the seasoned vet he is.

10) DEPTH CHARGE "HI VOLTAGE MAN" (DC Recordings/UK/12) Did someone say "low-end damage"? "Seasoned vet"? Almost no one's been doing it longer or harder than J. Saul Kane. The king of lo-fi electro/hip-hop soundscapes does it again.

11) STRANGE FRUIT PROJECT "SOUL TRAVELIN" (Spilt Milk/US/CD) Lovely stuff outta Texas with a smooth and soulful Fat Jon/ Five Deez type sound. Grab the 12" out now.

12) TOO SHORT "BURN RUBBER" (Jive/US/12)/ BEASTIE BOYS "CH-CHECK IT OUT" (Capitol/US/12) It's not like me to review major labels, but these guys here made some of the most landmark music in my life and are still putting out killer shit and I'm still playing the hell out of it!

LUCKY 13) MARS1, NOME, DAMON SOULE & DAVID LEE 4WORDS (2nd Round Prod/US/book) Four bright talents on the Bay Area arts scene have teamed up to put out this cross-section of their work: mostly paintings, but also drawings, photography, collage and sculpture. The work is a slice of young, urban perspective from the curb up. Find it in your funkier galleries and shops, but hurry— they're bound to go fast.



Goya Music PRESENTS:

Finally! The eagerly awaited project album from **Bugz In The Attic's Daz I Kue and Kaidi Tatham alongside 4 Hero's Dego** is ready to drop. Over a year in the making but well worth the wait, with contributions from the seminal **BembeSegue, Lady Alma, Rasiyah and Face** plus the Future Rage single. An outstanding debut album.

Sweden's **Swell Session** and **Stateless** main vocalist **Ernesto** delivers his own debut album a sophisticated collection of soulful latin bossa and broken jazz numbers pure class..!

Kyoto Jazz Massive's **Especial Records** launch their debut off-shoot label **Especial European Edition Series**, a collection of their best releases to date. 12's from this highly collectable label have been changing hands for 5 times their original Japanese price tag so to allow more people globally to gain access to the Especial back catalogue, we're releasing 4 track EP's with a UK price tag. The first 12" will be the much sought after **Hajime Yoshizawa - "Endless Bow"** original mix alongside both **Jimpster & Fauna Flash** remixes plus the **West Tokyo** mix of another tune **"Secret Flight"**. Subsequent 12's in the **Especial European Edition series** will feature **Hajime Yoshizawa's "I am with you" & "Secret Flight"** (original mix) (flipped by **Chris & Nina's "Fried Banana"** on volume 2 and **Domu's Bakura project** on volume 3. Both these 12s will follow in the next few months.

Also look out for these hot new 12's dropping soon.

QUANGO - Rock It Tonight - **PEOPLE** * **FWX1207** **IZZI DUNN** - "Out Of My Hands" (KAIDI TATHAM AND XMEN mixes) **FIREWORX** * **DOMU** Worldwide EP **LOUNGIN' RECORDINGS** * **SOMATIK** - "4 Track EP **TWISTED FUNK** * **FREEQ UNIQUE** - Who Are We...? **BITASWEET** * **DALUNATIKZ** - Estoy Loca **ARTHROB** * **L'AROYE** - Be The One **FACES** * **BEMBE SEGUE** - Mother Of The Future (Live Version) **MAIN SQUEEZE** **ALTON MILLER** - Choose To Believe **DEEPER SOUL**

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IN THE STUDIO DJ ZEPH

THE BAY AREA'S HIP-HOP WORKAHOLIC CHOPS IT UP ON THE REGULAR.

Words: Pete Babb Photograph: Christopher Woodcock



Santa Cruz, CA, native DJ Zeph is a producer's producer. Armed with a keen ear and the musical knowledge gleaned from years of DJing (not to mention a tutelage under Kutmasta Kurt), he has immersed himself in all aspects of production, from digging for beats to chopping and programming to EQing to ensuring proper signal flow between pieces of equipment. Having produced beats for MCs, including producing L*Roneous's entire *Imaginarium* LP and hooking up tracks for his MC partner Azeem, he has also flexed his instrumental muscle on his self-titled debut album and his latest full-length, *Sunset Scavenger*. And while he could chop drums "all day long," he also appreciates elegant simplicity, noting, "You can take one bar of something, and if it's the right bar, it's fresh as fuck."

What was your first equipment setup?

Somebody I knew had a Digitech guitar effects foot box and pedal and, as I messed around with it, I realized that you could use it to do echoes and effects, but you could also use it to loop stuff. So I got one of those, and I found that if you had a one-bar drum loop, you could mix another record in and turn the drum sample on and off real quick, and between turning it off and back on, you could sample what was playing on the record. So I was like, "Oh wow, you could chop shit like this." For every chop, you had to go back and mix the sample in and try to catch it again. So that was it for me. I bought a four-track, and that was pretty much the beginning of production for me: a guitar pedal and a four-track. Later, I bought an EPS 16 Plus, and that's the sampler I still use today.

Your setup now is basically just the sampler, turntables and Pro Tools. Do you keep it so simple for a reason?

I've been very conscious about taking certain things out of the channel of my production. You've got to have the right signal path when you're sampling something. It's gotta be the right chain. If anything, you want it to sound better than it sounds coming out of the mixer. I was having problems with my old mixing board, for example. I was using it to send stuff to Pro Tools or the sampler, and I found that it made stuff sound real thin. There's a lot of sound guru heads who know what not to do, and I listened to them.

So you run your sounds straight into the sampler now?

If it's drums and I want to chop it up and have it isolated and triggerable, then I'll run it right out of the Rane (turntable mixer) into the sampler. But a lot of my production ideas start with a DJ blend, so sometimes it never hits the sampler. Like with the song "Floor Wax," the sampler wasn't even used. I've been trying to keep it as simplistic as possible.

"I GET MORE EXCITED ABOUT CHOPPING SHIT UP THAN ANYTHING."

It seems like you spent a lot of time on the mixing and EQing aspects this time around.

I think mixing has a big effect on the way that stuff comes out. Who you're mixing it with, what kind of projects they're into...my album sounds beyond what I would be able to do on my own. It had a lot of people's energy going into it, especially co-producing it with Ben Conrad, a professional audio engineer who works at Fantasy Studios. That had a big impact on the way it sounds.

Do you aim to be a strictly sample-based producer?

Not necessarily, but the original idea is usually a sample off vinyl. I used to take violin lessons and played the piano and stuff, but I'm not really trying to go there. I feel plenty liberated [using] vinyl and freaking it. I feel like there's an endless amount of material out there in the world. I'll never be able to outdig Cut Chemist and Shadow, but I need to do my own thing, and I can honestly say that one of the best things that I've ever done is flip the drums from "Breezin'" (George Benson). That's a dollar-bin record, but you've gotta think of all the little spots between the notes as drum hits, and you can get a drum break out of that. There were these rolls in there, and by catching a certain hi-hat with this roll and using that hi-hat more than once per bar...it sounded like some Lou Donaldson shit or something. So I'm finding breaks where there weren't really breaks. I get more excited about chopping shit up than anything.

So even if you aren't sampling all the time, you'll still be chopping?

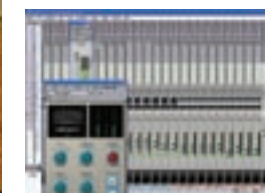
DJZ: If I had all the time in the world, I'd spend time learning how to chop up everything—bass, guitar, keyboard, horns, vocals—go down the line and focus on learning how to chop those things up like chopping drums. That's the shit that I really like: real good chops.

Sunset Scavenger is out now on Wide Hive Recordings.

www.widehive.com



Key elements to DJ Zeph's studio: Ensoniq EPS 16 Plus sampler and Pro Tools screenshots





FINAL SCRATCH, ALLOWING THE DJ TO MAKE IMPULSIVE CHOICES IN AN EASY-TO-USE INTERFACE...

FINAL SHOWDOWN

When the hardware/software combo program Final Scratch was first introduced three years ago, it was hailed by many DJs, artists and writers as the next standard in DJ mixing. After all, allowing a DJ to forgo the heavy record box in favor of thousands of digital files (including mp3s, WAV/AIFF and CD) saved on a laptop clearly allows a wide variety of musical choices, while still playing in an analog fashion.

For all the praise, **Final Scratch 1.5** is hardly a de facto standard for most DJs, due in part to the cost (\$699) combined with the fallibility of using a laptop as your only sound source and the fairly touchy calibration of the special Final Scratch coded vinyl.

A key component missing in the first version of FS was the lack of a standard software to use in conjunction with the hardware, but thankfully, Stanton has resolved this issue by linking up with Native Instruments' Traktor virtual DJ software, favored by many laptop DJs these days.

Traktor FS (not to be confused with Traktor DJ Studio 2, which is a completely stand-alone software program) has a flexible functionality that works well with Final Scratch, allowing the DJ to make impulsive choices in an easy-to-use interface, including cueing, pitching and scratching on the turntables, as well as a faster database search function, drag-and-drop support, a split graphical waveform separating bass from treble, a song browser section to preview tracks on a third deck, BPM recognition and the ability to label each track with a variety of attributes and playlist assignments. And because Final Scratch is Mac-friendly (Unix-based, it works on both Mac and Microsoft OS), Traktor easily imports iTunes playlists from your computer or external device such as the iPod.

Of course, all these extra bells and whistles don't mean a hell of a lot if it's not user-friendly to the DJ. While it does take some time to figure out how to hook your computer to your turntables and mixer via the included ScratchAmp, Final Scratch is still a relatively painless and exciting way to approach DJing from a fresh perspective. And you still get the street cred of playing on vinyl. *Tim Pratt*

Final Scratch 1.5 with Traktor FS MSRP: \$699.99
www.stantonmagnetics.com, www.native-instruments.com

ALWAYS IN CONTROL

At this year's winter NAMM gear convention, I wandered over to the Behringer booth (it was a *Matrix*-looking mini technology complex, actually) just as the grey-suited German company president was giving a press conference about their 2004 gear. He started talking about high-end mixing desks and my attention immediately drifted to a display table showcasing the sleek **Behringer B-Control Rotary BCR2000** and **B-Control Fader BCF2000** controllers. Despite a lack of brochures or available staff to tell me what they did, my gadget-nerd alarm went off as I examined them to figure out what the knobs and faders did. I'm glad I dug into these beautifully designed metallic blue MIDI control surfaces because they're two of the best I've seen.

The BCR2000 replaces mouse clicks to control knobs on your software sequencer with 24 endless (and buttery smooth) rotary handles. You can assign one to control an effect and another for a volume slider; either way, the BCR2000 will allow your live performances or studio mix-downs to become a more intuitive experience. Just think, now you can jump around and get sweaty like Sonig recording star Jason Forrest (Donna Summer) does on stage!

Like its knobby sibling, the BCF2000 is a USB control surface that easily interfaces with your laptop or desktop computer through an available USB port. Simply plug it in, make a few MIDI assignments, and unlock the BCF's motorized sliding faders and eight rotary encoders. This controller features several "push-to-set" function buttons that allow you make adjustments and set



CONTROL KNOBS ON YOUR SOFTWARE SEQUENCER WITH 24 ENDLESS (AND BUTTERY SMOOTH) ROTARY HANDLES.

the parameters of a number of functions—like the exact amount of reverb or the position of a panning knob.

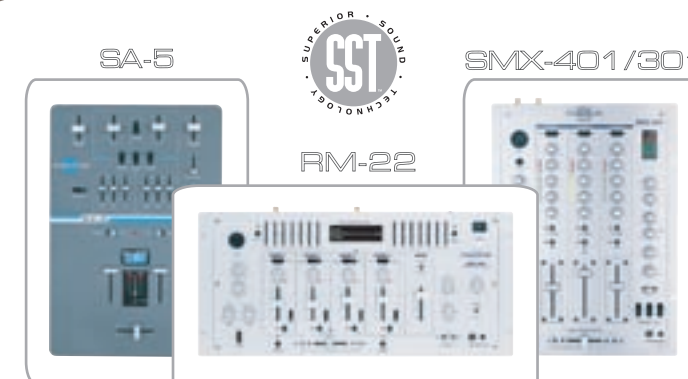
Both the BCF and BCR are perfect for controlling virtual mixers, synths and effects in programs like Apple Emagic Logic, Steinberg Cubase or Cakewalk Sonar and each are far from busy-looking devices: their surface layouts are clean, well lit with LEDs and easy to navigate. Both work with Mac and PC operating systems and the Behringer name brings with it excellent online support, product manuals and unsurpassed mechanical durability. So next time you find yourself caught in a boring lecture on mixing desk improvements, let me remind you: don't pay attention, you'll find out cooler things by accident. *Derek Gray*

Behringer B-Control Rotary BCR2000 MSRP: \$189.99
B-Control Fader BCF2000 MSRP: \$249.99
www.behringer.com



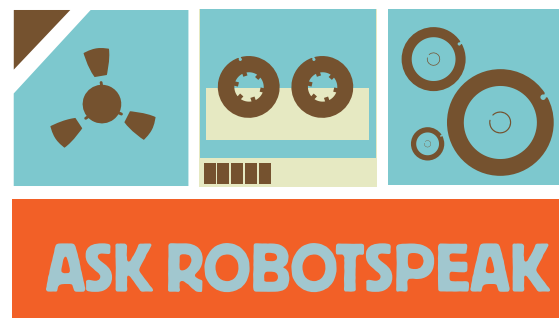
We know you take this shit seriously. So do we.

That's why you'd be crazy not to look for a mixer with SST technology. SST stands for Superior Sound Technology. But what it really means is that you're smart enough to buy a mixer with zero bleed through and a fader kill that rivals the most expensive on the market, all without spending the sick loot usually associated with this kind of gear. Anyone who spins for life will tell you that Stanton's SST Mixers deliver nothing but the mix you want, pure and simple. When you are ready to commit to the life, you are ready for the Stanton Standard.



For all the Stanton product specs and a list of retailers go to djforlife.com

DJ For Life.sm



XLR8R's readers pose their perplexing gear questions to the music technology experts at SF's RobotSpeak computer music shop. Send questions to askrobotspeak@xlr8r.com and your answer will appear in next issue!

Dear Robot Speak,
I've been slowly getting into electronic music production after some years in indie rock bands. I still can't get my head around how to use VST plug-ins. Can you give a brief explanation of the difference between VST and VSTi, and tell me some of your recommended favorite plug-ins? Any helpful websites I can visit?
Vince Waters
Minneapolis, MN

Hello Vince,
VST, or Virtual Studio Technology, is a plug-in format developed by Steinberg in the mid-'90s. Similar to Digidesign's popular TDM format, the VST format instead uses a computer's "native" or built-in processor for DSP number crunching.

The easiest way to think about VST is to imagine a software recreation of a hardware signal processor. For example, when you want to route your audio through say, a delay unit, rather than having your hired studio lackey grab a hardware one and patch the real thing into your audio path using patch cables, you simply create an "instance" of a VST version of a compressor within your audio sequencer's virtual mixer. Like the real thing, the VST delay can be patched as either an Insert or a Send. The difference is that all the routing is done for you instantly, and virtually.

VSTis, or VST Instruments, are just that: virtual software representations of hardware instruments whose audio and MIDI connections are routed virtually within your host sequencer. Like their VST counterparts, VSTis are called up as an insert within an audio channel of your sequencing host. As you play your MIDI keyboard, your MIDI performance is routed straight into the VSTi. The audio produced by the instruments is then routed directly through your sequencer's audio mixer, and out through your audio interface.

A great thing about the VST format (as well as Apple/Emagic's Audio-Unit and Cakewalk/Microsoft's DXI formats) is that the Software Development Kit (SDK) required to create them is freely obtainable, allowing anyone to make a plug-in of their own. Although there are a ton of superb VST plugs available commercially from companies such as Waves, Bomb Factory and Native Instruments, there are also many home-brewed VSTs and VSTis available for free on the internet. My current favorite collection of free VST plugs is Destroy FX. If you enjoy mangling your precious tracks beyond recognition, then check them out at www.smartelectronix.com/~destroyfx.

A thorough online resource for VST, AU and DXI "open source" plugs can be found online at www.kvr-vst.com. Here you'll find the latest news from the VST front. You will also find tutorials, forums, chat rooms and more.
Alan Stewart, RobotSpeak



SHERMAN'S TAKE ON THE AUDIO FILTER IS QUITE POSSIBLY THE MOST COMPLEX AND EXPANSIVE THAT MAN HAS EVER DEVELOPED.

YOU CAN BANK ON THIS

Filters are the core element behind all life, from the kind used to facilitate reverse water osmosis to the kind of filters used by pestering parents to block internet porn. Electronic music synthesis is the engine of freedom; however, proper filtration is key to achieving audio nirvana. Sherman's take on the audio filter is quite possibly the most complex and expansive that man has ever developed. Compiled from pure organic analog electronics, the Sherman Filterbank 2 is far more than your typical three switch low-pass, high-pass and band-pass filters; rather, it is a harmonically fluent musical instrument.

Utilizing two separate filters (either in parallel or series), a powerful ADSR-type envelope and an extensive dual polarity LFO, your input signal has an endless flowchart of possibilities for broader sonic variance and heightened harmonic brilliance.

In addition to the filter bank's fundamental synthesis options, Sherman includes an FM (frequency modulation) input and an AM (amplitude modulation) input, designed to initiate fat timbres and aggressively immense textures to your sound. 31 knobs and six three-position switches make up the front panel's editable parameters, while all the corresponding analog modular CV (control voltage) input jacks live on the rear panel.

Given the extensive list of probable editing factors possible with Filterbank 2, drum loops will thrive in unscathed terrain, vocals shall chant in hidden chambers and synths will unveil their secret harmonic intrigue. *Praxis*

Sherman Filterbank 2 MSRP: \$699; www.sherman.be



TRULY REAL SOUNDING WAHS ARE JUST A PART OF THEIR STUNNING GUITARSENALS.

IT'S WAH-T'S HAPPENING NOW

As guitarists know, oft-underfoot wah-wah pedals are almost as disposable as the nine-volt batteries used to power them. In the home studio environment, it makes sense to download the virtual version rather than shell out for a Morley, Crybaby or Vox, set up an effect send, and re-record your naked keys, guitar and filtered drum sounds.

There are many cheap and less-than-ideal options: drawing a filter curve in your sequencer, an auto-wah, or routing controls to a MIDI synthesizer. Alternatively, use an expression pedal and send a MIDI signal to your sequencer, controlling the filter frequency and resonance of a dedicated VST effect.

For PC users, both the Coyote Wah and the Green Machine are free downloads. The TC Works Touch-Wah is another fine virtu-wah, and it even looks like one. For those with more of a cash flow, the set of guitar suites offered by IK Multimedia's Amplitube and Universal Audio's UAD-1 Nigel (please turn it to 11) have truly real sounding wahs as just a part of their stunning guitarsensals. Remember, Herbie Hancock wouldn't be caught dead without a wah on his clav. *Jeese Terry*
www.ikmultimedia.com, www.greenmachine.pwuq.net, www.tcelectronic.com, www.coyotes.bc.ca, www.uaudio.com

STRANGE PROCESSES

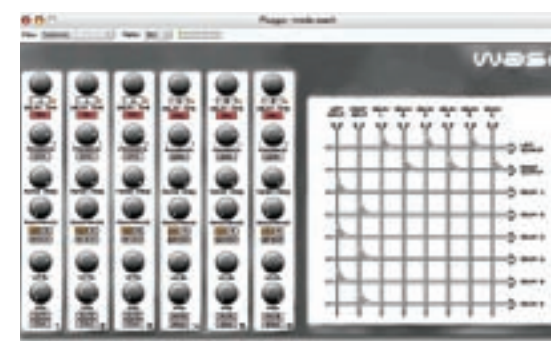
At some point in the future of electronic production, re-creation of traditional effects will be a dead industry. The best flanger, phaser, reverb and compressor and Mini-Sequential-Juno-Rhodes will be perfected, and everyone will already have it. Unfortunately for your wallet, there is still a company creating things you need to own even if you don't know they exist yet. Cycling 74's Mode is a new suite of three virtual instruments and two effects processors (comprising 18 smaller modules in all), designed to take your music off into unusual terrain.

Instrument number one, Spin, takes the concept of rhythmic delay and designates enough timing control to satisfy the most stringent poly-micro-rhythmist (in 32 note steps up to four measures long). Spin also adds fully programmable panners, overdrive, a hip volume sequencer and much more. Also in the delay category is Wash, capable of looping up to six delays, and crossing their wires into tangled aural configurations. Mono is a powerful synthesizer which lets you draw your own distortion curve, while Poly brings together analog and digital synthesis methods for something entirely original sounding. Both have exotic arpeggiators.

Perhaps the strangest instrument is the Bang drum synthesizer, which warps samples and clangy FM synthesizers into unheard of percussion designs. At times it's difficult to get your head around what's going on—some plug-ins don't affect the audio, but rather the timing and modulation of other effects. With Cycling 74's products, music comes out of the art of their design craft—each plug-in is like a creativity multiplier that can transform ugly sounds into something beautiful and bizarre, or vice versa. *Jeese Terry*

Cycling 74 Mode MSRP: \$199; www.cycling74.com

PERHAPS THE STRANGEST INSTRUMENT IS THE BANG DRUM SYNTHESIZER.



ECHO DROP

The battle to create a portable notebook recording device is at the forefront of every pro audio manufacturer's marketing campaign. Echo has developed a compact yet crystal clear soundcard designed specifically for the PCMCIA (cardbus) slot in your laptop. Echo Indigo I/O is straight forward, with one stereo input and one stereo output, similar to that of your built-in audio card, less the horrendous SNR (signal-to-noise ratio). Recording at a true 24-bit 96 kHz, your sound in and out is just as pristine as that of a high-end digital recording studio.

What truly sets this card aside, however, is the Indigo's use of virtual outputs. Essentially, the card appears to software applications as though it has eight separate outputs, which are then mixed down to the physical output through the card's "console" software. With the provided multi-client drivers, Indigo can play back through multiple applications simultaneously (i.e. an editor and a soft synth). No SPDIF in, no microphone/guitar in, no breakout box—simply quality compact digital recording. *Praxis*

Echo Indigo I/O MSRP: \$179; www.echoaudio.com

ECHO HAS DEVELOPED A COMPACT YET CRYSTAL CLEAR SOUND CARD DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR THE PCMCIA (CARDBUS) SLOT IN YOUR LAPTOP.



IMAGINE A MIXING BOARD CONNECTED TO THE BEST PRESETS ON ALL OF THOSE GREAT SYNTHS YOU CAN'T AFFORD.

GET ETHEREAL

Delete the traditional model of creating a sound generator from your mind. As with their bass-building monster Trilogy, Spectrasonics has taken one style of synthesizer and maxed it out to the utmost proportions. While there are good bass, percussion and lead lines available, **Atmosphere** is mostly about pads, pads, pads. It's a greatest-hits approach, with meticulous sampling of every kind of method of synthesis available. The resulting virtual instrument is part sample library, part synthesizer and part sonic sculptor, allowing you to mix everything from analog and acoustic sources to granular, FM and neural processing synthesizers.

Imagine a mixing board connected to the best presets on all of those great synths you can't afford, hooked up in parallel. Presets like Sitar Encased In Glass and Earth Drone Bass give you an idea of what to expect. Whether Atmosphere is right for you may rest on your hard drive space.

The 3.7-gigabyte library boasts incredible sonic quality (and familiar synth sounds), but it can clog up a good portion of a small hard drive. If you're an electronic architect looking for stunning sound or an aspiring composer searching for ambient background noise in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* or *Star Trek: Voyager*, there is a sound here to power your starship. *Jeoss Terry*

Spectrasonics Atmosphere MSRP: \$399; www.spectrasonics.net

BACK TRACKTION

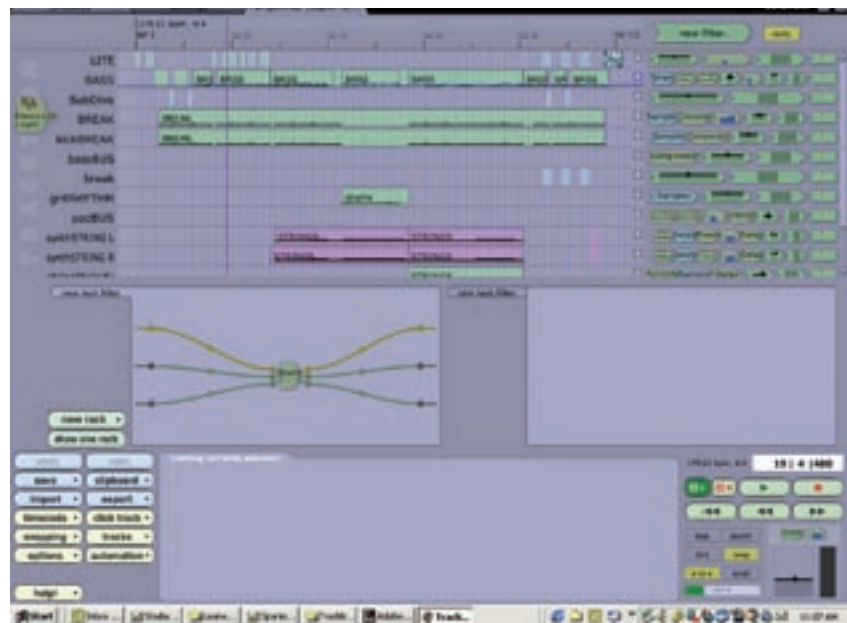
Most producers touch a Mackie mixing desk at one time or another. The ubiquitous blue- and red-knobbed mixers adorn greasy rock clubs and spit-shined home studios; from simple eight-channel devices up to 48 channel mammoths. Now the soundboard kings jump into the world of audio production software with the following declaration: "Goodbye learning curve. Hello Tracktion." When I hear such an audacious statement, I can only think to myself, "Yeah, right." But I'll be damned if **Mackie's** new **Tracktion** software isn't more fun than dropping acid at Disneyland.

Think of Tracktion as a combination of several virtual music production suites—namely Ableton Live and Cakewalk's Project5—only simpler. And to call it simple is not to say it's not powerful. For the price, this is an extremely versatile collection of tools.

But back to the "learning curve" statement: Unless you've worked with a number of home studio programs before, you won't exactly be able to install this program and begin recording music. The reason is that, although Tracktion has dramatically simplified the screen layout of audio production software, it's so jam-packed with sub-menus (editing, volume, plug-ins, effects) that it takes a minimum of a few hours to learn what patch does what.

Like Propellerheads' Reason or Ableton Live, Tracktion enables live electronic instrument recording, the use of outboard MIDI devices and keyboards, and is an excellent environment to chop and manipulate your own samples. Note that last bit: Tracktion is much more powerful if you already have a good collection of samples—either homemade or from a sample library—to use in the software's built-in sampler. Fortunately, Tracktion already has an ample online community (accessible through their website's user forum) that offers free samples and plug-ins galore.

Tracktion's subtle single-window design enables quick navigation of the various drag and drop audio clips, effects and tools. Other top-notch elements include the ability to use any VST or VSTi plug-ins, a killer bundle of built-in plugs (including reverb, EQ, delay, chorus, phaser, compressor and pitch-shifter), real time editing (change effects, loop lengths, tempo, pitch and hear the results as your track is playing), support of ReWire 2.0, plus the ability to create single archive files to make it easy to swap songs with another user.



Many of the mini-menus and drag-and-drop features will seem patently similar to Live, but Tracktion's layout and functions are simpler, thus allowing a quicker path to music creation. Never a bad thing, eh?

Compatible with Mac or PC, the CPU and memory drain on your computer are minimal and the audio quality is pristine. Once I got the swing of things, I had the volume up to 11 mashing up some serious breakbeats. As a faithful user of Reason, Logic and Live, I give Tracktion a near-perfect rating for those looking for another approach, different options or a simpler, road-worthy suite for quick music production. Competition to the existing platforms will fuel further developments and innovation all-around. Welcome Mackie and Tracktion to the fold. *Tomas*

Mackie Tracktion MSRP: \$80; www.tracktion.com

I'LL BE DAMNED IF MACKIE'S NEW TRACKTION SOFTWARE ISN'T MORE FUN THAN DROPPING ACID AT DISNEYLAND.



MUSIC MAKER 2005 DELUXE SEEMS MOST LIKE A CATCH-ALL "KITCHEN-SINK."

MAKE IT FUNKY

Music software is becoming increasingly more versatile and productive, while at the same time decreasing in cost, enabling a larger number of people to take a stab at production. Retailing for around 60 bucks, Magix's latest **Music Maker 2005 Deluxe** software is a great example of entry-level pricing for what seems like a true steal.

Music Maker 2005 Deluxe seems most like a catch-all "kitchen-sink" software—a true virtual studio that seems to do anything a DJ, producer, video artist or sound engineer would require, including music creation, mixing and remixing DJ sets, editing individual tracks, melding video and visual graphics with the audio, importing and exporting tracks and lots more.

Using its 14 virtual studio instruments (including a virtual analog drum computer, a Vocalizer with automatic tuners, vocoder and time-stretching functions), effects units and more than 4,000 sound samples, the user can make tracks on 96 stereo channels with easy-to-use visual representations in the arranger. In addition, you can edit individual tracks or mix together much like a DJ would, create and mix videos and animation synced up with your music, as well as upload your audio/visual mix to a website Music Maker helps you build.

If that sounds a bit overwhelming to you, it should. It'll definitely take some time to figure out all of Music Maker's functionalities and how to use them effectively—in fact, there may be too many options (having two computer monitors in your studio would be optimal). But its ease of use and versatility far outweighs the confusion of the multitude of options. *Tim Pratt*

Magix Music Maker 2005 Deluxe MSRP: \$59.99; www.magix.com

CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Arturia is carving out a sizable niche alongside virtual instrument software companies like Propellerheads and Native Instruments. **Arturia Storm 3.0** attempts to combine everything a digital studio user might need—including synthesizers, drum machines, effects and a MIDI and Audio sequencer—all on the cheap.

The designers have outdone themselves with their Composition Wizard, giving you examples of how to do everything—from drum & bass drums to rock 'n' roll and house. The jazzier sounds, and the horns and strings in particular, are excellent; these tutorials are useful whether you already know how to score strings and horns or can't play three chords on a guitar.

For users of previous versions of Storm, there's a new synthesizer and lots of improvements. Better ergonomics, an improved mixer and audio sequencer and window management on your desktop complement full MIDI control. Other software companies should take note: Arturia always

includes a printed manual.

Like their virtual synths—the Moog Modular, Minimoog and CS80—Storm 3.0 gives you exceptional sound quality, sacrificing a sizable portion of your processing power. It's worth it, especially for beginners to computer music or music novices in general. Storm is also ReWire compliant, allowing you to easily hook up to your other favorite programs. The question is whether you'd ever want to. *Jeoss Terry*

Arturia Storm MSRP: \$149; www.arturia.com



VIS ED: RINZEN

Five obsessive Australians create alternate realities for the avant garde.

Words: Stacey Dugan
Illustrations: Rinzen, at right, an exclusive work for XLR8R



Rinzen is a Japanese word that means several things—including “commanding,” “awe-inspiring,” and “a sudden awakening”—although it’s not frequently used in modern-day Japan. At least, not until Brisbane, Australia-based design collaborative Rinzen came along. The five-person outfit—including members Steve and Rilla Alexander, Adrian Clifford, Craig Redman and Karl Maier—has redefined the term with its graphic design. Now, the name Rinzen also connotes innovative and sensuous design that melds disparate styles and techniques into one sleek, cohesive package.

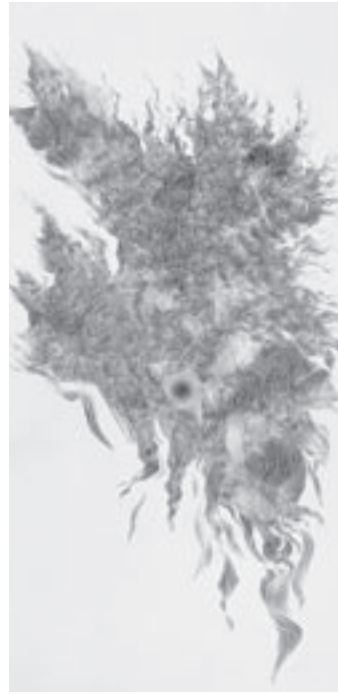
Sort through Rinzen’s extensive archive of diverse material and you’ll find edgy party flyers and retro clothing silk-screens. Crisp, geometric illustrations twist classic Japanese woodblock printing techniques with a bit of futurism. Short anime films glimpse into strange, alternate realities—summertime utopias full of exaggerated pixels, black and white rainbows and a polar bears strolling out of lukewarm bodies of water. In another scene, dolphins, zebras, monkeys and strange hybrid animals commit mass suicide by jumping from the windows of a high-rise building in a decadent urban landscape.

But even after viewing such an elaborate mash-up of illustration, web design, print, animation, audio and contract work, it’s hard to get a firm grasp on Rinzen’s signature style. That’s because they don’t have one. Rinzen doesn’t accredit specific designs to individual team members; not that they’re against that notion—they’re as prepared to seize and celebrate individualism as they are to do away with it completely. The only rules are there are no rules, just a constant effort to reinvent oneself and one’s concept of art and design, to inspire and be inspired by others in the group.

Sweet inspiration has recently yielded a series of CDs, prints and a book (*RMX Extended Play*, published by Die-Gestalten Verlag) from Rinzen, all under the name RMX. And when the collective isn’t birthing new, avant-garde projects and aliases, its members—average age: 27.8—can be found making animated ringtones, spring-boarding into solo music projects, putting together group gallery shows and installations, designing for clothing companies Mooks and Kitten and, recently, starting an independent clothing label called Liness.

www.rinzen.com





What mediums does Rinzen work in?

Rilla Alexander: Our illustrative work is usually finished digitally; however, we work with various media—ink, watercolor and pencil. We usually paint our large pieces and wall murals, although they are printed if the scale demands it.

Steve Alexander: Music is another medium we like working with. The similarities in process are fascinating, and inform our visual work too. Adrian and I are both currently working on our solo albums (to be released this year through Rinzen); they are two very personal projects we've been working on since the last RMX disc was put together. We've also been working with other musicians in their production and collaborative efforts.

And Rinzen produced an audio CD for the first RMX project, right?

SA: For the first RMX project we'd have Monday night get-togethers, drink quite a bit and generally lose the plot. We decided to record one of these "meetings," and from those recordings Adrian and I constructed about 14 tracks with no other samples or instruments involved. They were melodic and percussive explorations interspersed with granular deconstructed interludes. It was a brilliant exercise. While it's nothing groundbreaking or perfect, it's still a good listen. The second RMX sound project (included in the book published by DGV) involved a similar process.

Tell me about Rinzen's collaborative processes. In the RMX project one artist initiated a theme or concept by designing one or several pieces, and then other artists followed suit with their individual interpretations. Is

this generally the way Rinzen works?

RA: The first RMX project was a spontaneous game that we played purely for fun. It involved passing our work to each other, gradually remixing it, modifying and erasing. The concept for RMX was also a bit of a stab at the quantity and notoriety of music remixes at that time. We are now working on a new version of the project that will be exhibited in Berlin in October; [the new version] takes the game away from the printed page and the computer. It was such a satisfying and exciting process and we saw how our ideas and approaches matched and clashed.

We really enjoy exploring new ways of working collaboratively—sometimes all of us will work on a piece, each adding various elements. Sometimes the elements fit together seamlessly and other times they are a purposeful mix of approaches. We also work on many projects individually; however there is a gradual development of Rinzen ideas by virtue of the fact that we tend to explore similar themes and are inspired by each other's work.

Can you tell me a bit about Rinzen's design philosophy?

RA: We are very obsessive about what we do and want our work to show a sense of the excitement and delight with which we create it.

SA: We like working with people with vision, people that have a sympathetic desire to make something new. We don't work with companies that have destructive work practices.



What are destructive work practices?

SA: I think the term destructive says it all. It applies to all levels of work practice: environmentally, financially and creatively. We're not fanatical; it's just a common sense approach. It's common knowledge that certain international corporations have a reputation for taking advantage of undeveloped markets. A small local company can be equally as devious. We feel the least we can do is to not support those sorts of businesses. We don't work with cigarette companies.

RA: We apply this sort of thinking to our own work too. It may mean that some of our products are more expensive, but we know where they were made and under what circumstances.

Rinzen is a Japanese word that means sudden awakening. How does that word represent Rinzen?

RA: It's a very old Japanese word that's not in common use. We were attracted to it because the decision to work together as Rinzen was like a sudden wake-up call.

SA: We liked the fact that the word was without association in people's minds. It's like a reminder of our intentions as a group: to always push our limitations.

How do Japanese art, cultural icons and pop culture influence Rinzen's designs?

RA: From a very early age I was surrounded with Japanese TV and toys. I had a Hello Kitty pencil case and watched *Astro Boy* every afternoon. Japanese was also the only language I learned at school. But, having said that, we watched just as much American, English and Canadian television, so I think it is really a matter of what you are drawn to.

SA: I've always appreciated the holistic attitude of

Japanese traditions but I also enjoy the extremity of modern Japan: traditional simplicity juxtaposed with the overloaded complexity of modern life. It's a place of complete opposites. I think also being Australian you feel a lack of cultural identity, so it's quite natural to embrace cultures that appeal to you, that seek to make sense of existence.

Do you feel like Australian design has a signature style?

RA: Australian design does not have a long history to fall back on (such as Swiss or German design), so there really isn't a particular style that would be easy identifiable as Australian. National styles, in general, are becoming more and more difficult to identify. We can all see new work from around the world instantly, so fashions tend to develop internationally.

SA: I've always felt Australian society was the combination of English and American society. So, to some degree, I feel that Australian design has always been a combination of existing ideas. I believe we fit into that to some extent. We're somewhat of a hybrid beast, not that it's an easily decipherable combination.

RA: Most of our work is actually international and is all done by email and phone. But we do have some wonderful support here and have really enjoyed the work we have done for Australian bands, in particular. We have also had a lot of collaborative opportunities here such as the huge piece, "Under Bifrost," we did at the State Art Gallery.

What inspires you?

RA: I love secondhand book stores which are full to overflowing with wonderful old books and exploring old markets in Germany full of East European hand puppets and fragments of old dolls.

SA: Music, music, music... I need to fill my ears with something new every hour I spend awake. It drives my work, fills it with passion and motivates me. Without sound I would shrivel and die. I'm also greatly inspired by spontaneity and improvisation.

RINZEN ON A FEW OF THEIR FAVORITE THINGS...



STEVE ALEXANDER

Favorite album of the past month:
Pony Loaf's *O Complex*
Inspiration of 2004:
Badminton



ADRIAN CLIFFORD

Favorite album of the past month:
Public Image Limited's *Flowers Of Romance*
Inspiration of 2004:
Clouds and bridges

RILLA ALEXANDER

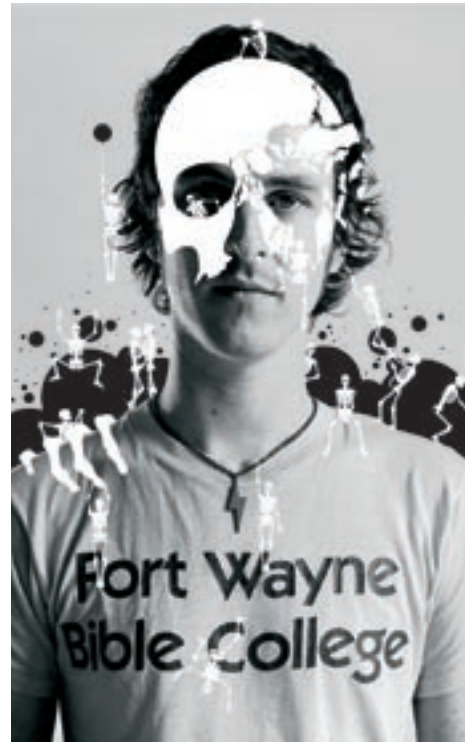
Favorite album of the past month:
Múm's *Blai Hnotturinn*
Inspiration of 2004:
Yuri Norstein's animation, *Tale of Tales*

KARL MAIER

Favorite album of the past month:
Phoenix's *Alphabetical*
Inspiration of 2004:
Repetitive patterns, modern living, daydreaming

CRAIG REDMAN

Favorite album of the past month:
Bloodfart
Inspiration of 2004:
Dead trees, TV, jealousy



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TBC: WRITE TO LIFE

THE PASSIONATE POLITICS OF AUTHOR ARUNDHATI ROY.

WORDS: ELKA KARI.

What do you do when you win the Booker Prize, get a million dollar contract for your first novel (which sells over 16 million copies) and are launched into international literary stardom?

You stop writing fiction and become a political activist, risking your safety, serving jail time and enduring the consternation of critics, both in India and abroad.

At least, that's the path that Arundhati Roy has chosen. Since the 1997 publication of her novel *The God of Small Things*, Roy has published countless articles exploring imperialism, globalization, poverty, nuclear arms and the war in Iraq, as well as several books, including *The Cost of Living*, *Power Politics*, *War Talk* and *Come September*. Her coverage of the Narmada Dam Project, which threatens to displace 200,000 people and impact millions more through the construction of a series of large dams on the River Narmada in central India, has fueled public outrage.

The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile, her latest book, follows three years of interviews between Roy and journalist David Barsamian. It has been said that any American wondering what the rest of the world thinks of her country should read Arundhati Roy. In *The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile*, she breaks it down for the isolated American public.

ON CORPORATE GLOBALIZATION

I think that the reason that I am a critic of corporate globalization is that it has increased the distance between the people who make decisions and the people who have to suffer those decisions. Earlier, for a person in a village in Kerala, his or her life was being decided maybe in Trivandrum or, eventually, in Delhi. Now it could be in The Hague or in Washington D.C., by people who know little or nothing of what consequences those decisions could have. And that distance between the decision-taker and the person who has to endure or suffer that decision is a very perilous road, full of the most unanticipated pitfalls. It's not that everything is designed to be malevolent, of course. Most of it isn't. But the distance between what happens on paper, in policy documents, and what happens on the ground is increasing enormously.

ON IMPERIALISM

[W]hat is happening today is really a nexus between the powerful elites in the world—imperialism by email. This time around, the white man doesn't have to go to poor countries and risk diarrhea and malaria or dying in the tropics. He just has his local government in place, which takes charge of "creating a good investment climate," in which those who are protecting against privatization and development projects—making investments unsafe—are called terrorists.

ON AMERICA'S LEADERSHIP

When an American missile cruiser shot down an Iranian passenger plane in 1988 by accident, killing 290 people, George Bush the elder—who was a presidential candidate at the time—was asked to comment, and said, "I will never apologize for the United States. I don't care what the facts are." That's the issue. He doesn't have to, because he's the most powerful man in the world. He has the most bombs, has the most money, and therefore, will be the school bully as long as he owns all the marbles in the yard.

ON TERRORISM

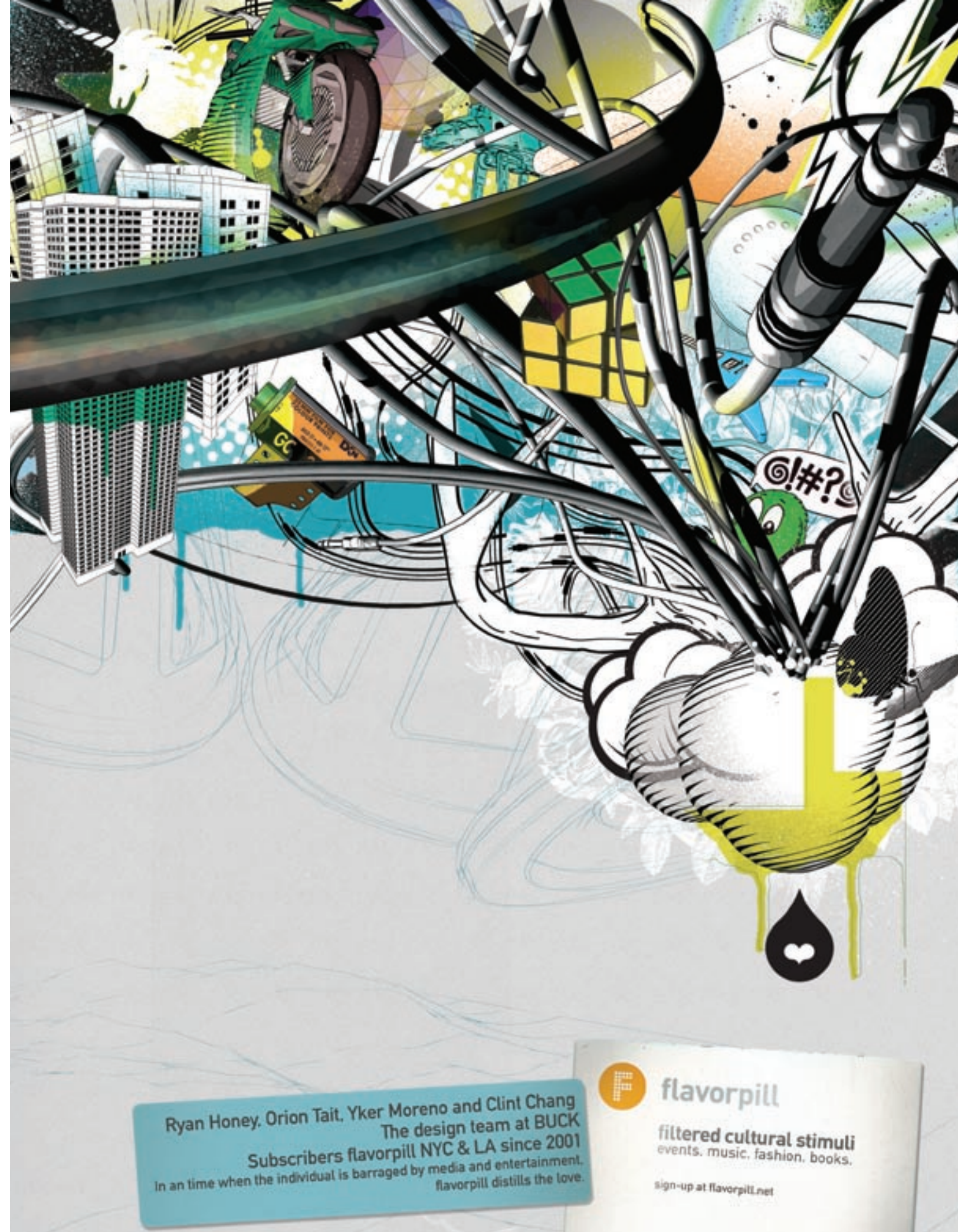
I was trying to think about what terrorism is, and I really thought that it is the logical end of this business of the free market and privatization. Terrorism is the privatization of war, in a way. It's the free marketeers of war—the people who believe that it isn't only the state that can wage war, but private parties can wage war as well.

ON WAR AND PEACE

You must have been taught—and I was taught—that peace is the opposite of war. But is it? In India, peace is a daily battle for food and shelter and dignity. We need much more to understand what's wrong with peace than to understand why we go to war. Once you're at war, all the logic is gone. You can't ask any questions anymore.

Arundhati Roy's latest book, *The Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*, will be out in September. www.southendpress.org

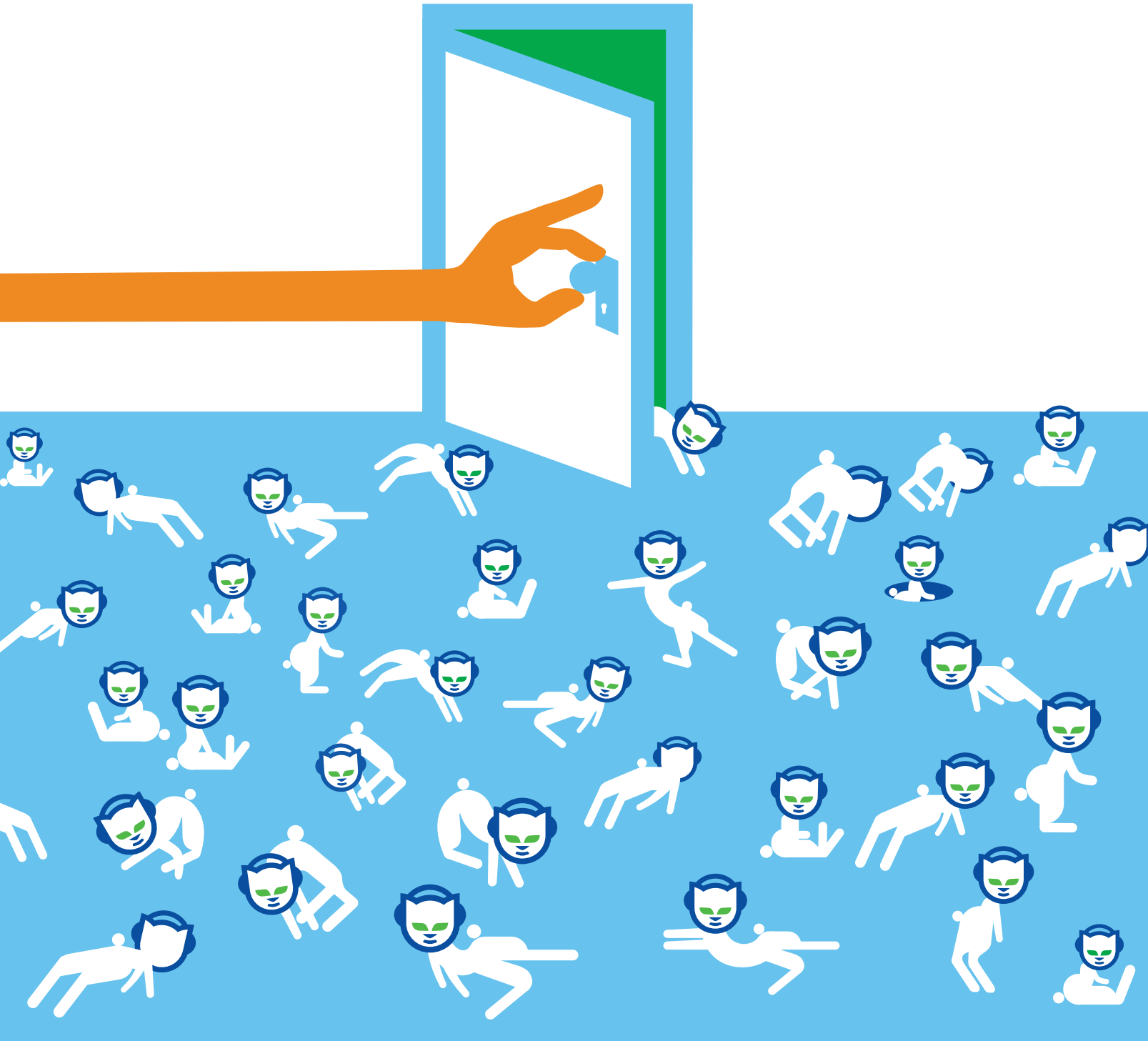
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